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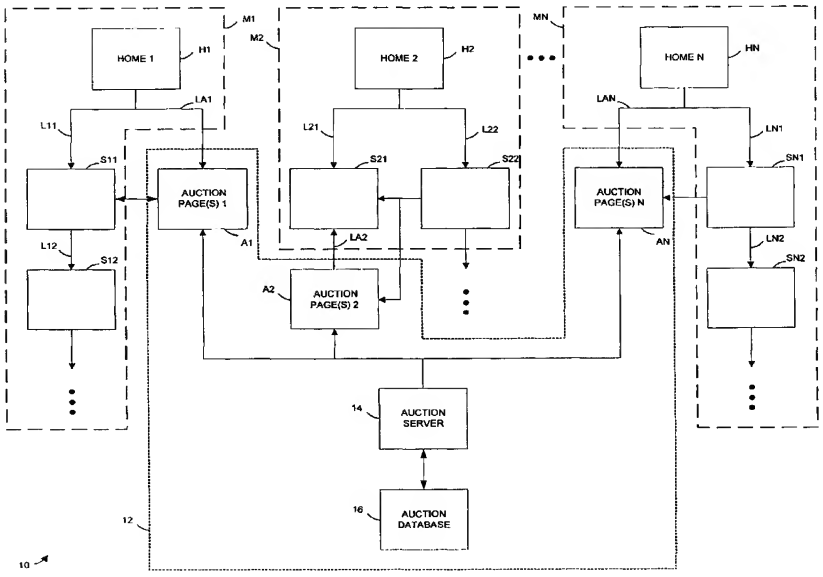
(54) Title: NETWORK-BASED SALES SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: A sales method and related apparatus for operation through a communications network. The method includes presenting items for sales at a first sales interface at a first network address and presenting them for sale at a second sales interface at a second network address. Offers are received for at least some of the items from offerors through the first sales interface, and offers are received for at least some of the items from offerors through the second sales interface. Some of the items are offered to offerors having placed offers through the first sales interface, and some are awarded to offerors having placed offers through the second sales interface.

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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

NETWORK-BASED SALES SYSTEM

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to computer-based systems and methods that enable sales transactions between third parties through a communications network, such as internet auction and classified systems.

Background of the Invention

Internet auction systems are well known. Such systems generally present web pages that allow users to bid for items offered through a particular auction services company. Other web pages permit users to submit items for sale through the same company. Classified systems that allow users to list, read, and respond to classified advertisements through the internet are also well known.

Before listing and selling items on current systems, users must select one of the available auction service companies or other sales service providers. This requires them to first find one or more appropriate web sites in the sea of information available on the internet. Users may then need to evaluate them to determine which ones are the most suitable for their purposes.

Summary of the Invention

In one general aspect, the invention features a sales method for operation through a communications network that includes presenting a first plurality of items for sale at a first sales interface at a first network address, presenting the first plurality of items for sale at a second sales interface at a second network address, receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the first sales interface, receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the second sales interface, awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the first sales interface, and awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the second sales interface.

In preferred embodiments, the method can further include the step of directing some of the offerors to the first sales interface through a first internet web site and some of the offerors to the second sales interface through a second internet web site. The network address of the first web site and the network address of the first sales interface can share a first domain name portion and the network address of the second web site and the network address of the second

sales interface can share a second domain name portion. The first domain name portion can include the domain name of the first internet web site and the second domain name portion can include the domain name of the second internet web site. The network address of the first web site can be mapped to a first sever, the network address of the second web site can be mapped to a second server, and the network address of the first sales interface and the network address of the second sales interface can be mapped to a third server. The method can further include the step of exchanging user information between the first and second web sites for a fee with the fee being accounted for electronically by the third server. The first and second web sites can belong to different legal entities. The first web site can provides at least a first additional service, other than sales, and the second web site can provide at least a second additional service, other than sales and different from the first additional service. The method can further include the step of exchanging user information, such as user e-mail addresses, between the first and second web sites for a fee. The method can further include the step of posting advertisements provided to the first site on the second site. The step of presenting the first plurality of items at a first sales interface and the step of presenting the first plurality of items at a second sales interface can present two different user interfaces. The step of presenting the first plurality of items for sale at a first sales interface and the step of presenting the first plurality of items at a second sales interface can be performed by a same server. The method can further include the steps of presenting a third plurality of items for sale at the first sales interface and refraining from presenting the same third plurality of the items for sale at the second sales interface. The steps of presenting a first plurality of items for sale can present the first plurality of items for auction, for a variable price sale, or in the form of classified listings. The method can further including the step of selectively blocking display of items received at a third sales interface from being displayed at the first sales interface. The step of blocking can be performed by a party receiving the listings or by a party presenting the listings for sale. The step of blocking can be performed for predetermined categories of items. Commissions can be charged according to both which party receives the listings and which party sells the items. The method can further include the step of receiving listings for a first subset of the first plurality of items at the first sales interface, and receiving listings for a second subset of the first plurality of items at a second sales interface at the second sales interface.

In another general aspect, the invention features a sales system for coupling to a communications network that includes a first sales interface at a first network address and a second sales interface at a second network address. The first sales interface includes a first offer interface and the second sales interface includes a second offer interface. The sales

system also includes a common database system responsive to offers from both the first and second offer interfaces.

In preferred embodiments, the address of the first sales interface address can shares a domain name portion with an address of a first web site and the address of the second sales interface can share a domain name portion with an address of a second web site. The domain name portion shared by the address of the first sales interface and the address of the first web site can include the domain name of the first web site, and the domain name portion shared by the address of the second sales interface and the address of the second web site can include the domain name of the second web site. The network address of the first web site can be mapped to a first sever, the network address of the second web site can be mapped to a second server, and the network address of the first sales interface and the network address of the second sales interface can be mapped to a third server, which server is operatively connected to the database system. The system can further include a transfer module operative to exchange user information between the first and second web sites for a fee, with the third server further including an accounting module operative to account for the fee. The first sales interface and the second sales interface can present different user interfaces. The system can further include a user customization module responsive to user input to customize user interface features of the first sales interface and the second sales interface. The user customization interface can be remotely accessible and can be accessible using a web browser. The system can further include a transfer module operative to exchange user information between the first and second web sites for a fee. The system can further include a cross-site advertising module operative to post advertisements provided to the first site on the second site. The system can further include a listing category selection interface that is operative to cause a second plurality of items to be presented for sale at the first sales interface and to prevent the same second plurality of the items to be presented at the second sales interface. The sales interfaces can be auction interfaces, variable price sale interfaces, or classified interfaces. The system can further include a filter for selectively blocking display of items received at a third sales interface from being displayed at the first sales interface. The filter can be responsive to input from a party receiving the listings or responsive to input from a party presenting the listings for sale. The filter can be responsive to a list of categories. The first sales interface can includes a first listing interface and the second sales interface can include a second listing interface. The system can further include a commissions module responsive to both the offer and listing interfaces.

In a further general aspect, the invention features a sales system for coupling to a communications network that includes a listing interface responsive to user input to list items for sale through a plurality of sales interfaces, and an offering interface responsive to user input at different ones of the plurality of sales interfaces to make offers for items listed through the different ones of the plurality of sales interfaces.

In preferred embodiments, the plurality of sales interfaces can be located at different network addresses. The listing interface can be an auction listing interface and wherein the offering interface can be a bidding interface. The listing interface and the offering interface can be variable price sale interfaces. The listing interface can be a classified listing interface and the offering interface can be a classified response interface.

In another general aspect, the invention features a sales method for operation through a communications network that includes receiving listings from an interface for items for sale through a plurality of sales interfaces, and receiving offers from an interface for items listed through different ones of the plurality of sales interfaces.

In preferred embodiments, the plurality of sales interfaces can be located at different network addresses. The listing interface can be an auction listing interface and the offering interface can be a bidding interface. The listing interface and the offering interfaces can be variable price sale interfaces. The listing interface can be a classified listing interface and the offering interface can be a classified response interface.

In a further general aspect, the invention features a sales method for operation through a communications network that includes presenting a first plurality of items for sale at a first sales interface by a first legal entity, presenting the first plurality of items for sale at a second sales interface by a second legal entity, receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the first sales interface, receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the second sales interface, awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the first sales interface, and awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the second sales interface.

Systems according to this aspect of the invention can be advantageous in that they allow individuals to buy and sell items at a member site that is part of a larger sales network. This network can provide buyers with access to a greater selection of items for purchase than they might otherwise enjoy from an individual auction services company. It can also provide sellers with a larger number of potential buyers for their items for sale.

Systems according to the invention can also be advantageous in that they can provide access to the network through member sites with different privately branded interfaces. The sales network can therefore be made accessible through a variety of different sites, including high-traffic sites, such as portals, community sites, and search engines. As a result, the network can be easily accessible to a large user base. And users may be more likely to use sales sites that are sponsored and branded by an entity with which they already do business.

In an additional general aspect, the invention features a sales system for coupling to a communications network that includes a first sales interface at a first network address, and a second sales interface at a second network address. The first sales interface includes a first set of categorization interface elements for categories of items, and the second sales interface includes a second set of categorization interface elements for categories of items. A common database system is operative to store items for both sales interfaces.

In preferred embodiments, the system can further include a categorization interface responsive to user input to define the first and second sets of categorized interface elements. The categorization interface can be responsive to user input to select categorization interface elements from a base categorization set. The categorization interface can be responsive to user input to add custom categorization elements in addition to those in the base categorization set to at least one of the first and second sets of categorization interface elements. The categorization interface can be responsive to user input to map categorization interface elements in at least one of the sets to categorization interface elements selected from the base categorization set. The system can be operative to cross-list items between the first and second interfaces if those items are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements that are both mapped to a same categorization interface element selected from the base categorization set. The system can be operative to cross-list items between the first and second interfaces if they are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements of the same type from the base categorization set. The categorization interface elements can include collapsible categorization interface element trees. The system can be responsive to user input to selectively refrain from cross-listing items between sites. The system can be responsive to user input to prevent listings placed at the first sales interface from being exported to the second sales interface. The system can be responsive to user input to prevent listings placed at the first sales interface from being imported to the second sales interface. The address of the first sales interface address can share a domain name portion with an address of a first web site and the address of the second sales interface can share a domain name portion with an address of a second web site. The domain name portion shared by the

address of the first sales interface and the address of the first web site can include the domain name of the first web site, and the domain name portion shared by the address of the second sales interface and the address of the second web site can include the domain name of the second web site. The network address of the first web site can be mapped to a first sever, the network address of the second web site can be mapped to a second server, and the network address of the first sales interface and the network address of the second sales interface can be mapped to a third server, with the third server providing the categorization interface to the first and second web sites through a network port. The categorization interface elements can each include different specification elements. The categorization interface elements can each include an unused attribute.

In another general aspect, the invention features a sales method that includes storing a central database of sales items. The method also includes listing a first plurality of the items categorized by a first set of set of categorization interface elements at a first sales interface, and listing a second plurality of the items categorized by a second set of set of categorization interface elements at a second sales interface.

In preferred embodiments, the method can further incluce the steps of defining the first set of categorization interface elements and the second set of categorization interface elements through a common categorization interface. The steps of defining can include selecting categorization interface elements from a base categorization set. The steps of defining can include adding custom categorization elements in addition to those in the base categorization set to at least one of the first and second sets of categorized interface elements in response to user input. The method can further include mapping categorization interface elements in at least one of the sets to categorization interface elements selected from the base categorization set. The method can further include the step of cross-listing items between the first and second interfaces if those items are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements that are both mapped to a same categorization interface element selected from the base categorization set. The method can further including the step of cross-listing items between the first and second interfaces if they are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements of the same type from the base categorization set. The categorization interface elements can include collapsible categorization interface element trees. The method can further include the step of selectively refraining from cross-listing items between sites. The categorization interface elements can each include different specification elements. The categorization interface elements can each include an unused attribute.

Systems according to this aspect of the invention can provide flexibility to sales systems that operate over a network by providing a versatile category interface. Sales site administrators can use this category interface to set up a category tree whose structure and nomenclature is fully customizable. This allows them to tailor their sites to the types of products sold and the nature of their users. And systems according to the invention can provide a further level of versatility by allowing categories of items to be selectively cross-listed to and from other sites.

In an additional general aspect, the invention features a sales system for coupling to a communications network that includes a first sales interface at a first network address and second sales interface at a second network address. The first sales interface can include a first set of user interface elements, and the second sales interface can include a second set of user interface elements. A customization interface can be responsive to user input to define the first and second sets of user interface elements.

In preferred embodiments, the customization interface can include a series of templates that each define display attributes of one or more views for the first and second sales interfaces. The customization interface can be responsive to user arrangement of a plurality of user interface tokens within the templates to define display attributes of one or more views for the first sales interface. The templates can be constructed and adapted to receive scripting commands. The customization interface can be responsive to user arrangement of a plurality of user interface tokens to define display attributes for one or more views of the first sales interface. The customization interface can be operative to define a set of transaction types for the system. The customization interface can be operative to define a set of transaction attributes for the system. The customization interface can be operative to provide different branding elements for the first sales interface and for the second sales interface. The customization interface can include a plurality of e-mail templates that each define display attributes of e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces. The customization interface can include an e-mail sender address selection interface operative to define a sender address for e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces. The customization interface can be remotely accessible. The customization interface can be accessible using a web browser. The customization interface can be a categorization interface responsive to user input to define the first and second sets of categorized interface elements. The categorization interface can be responsive to user input to select categorization interface elements from a base categorization set. The categorization interface can be responsive to user input to add custom

categorization elements in addition to those in the base categorization set to at least one of the first and second sets of categorization interface elements. The categorization interface can be responsive to user input to map categorization interface elements in at least one of the sets to categorization interface elements selected from the base categorization set. The categorization interface elements can include collapsible categorization interface element trees. The categorization interface elements can each include different specification elements. The categorization interface elements can each include an unused attribute.

In another general aspect, the invention features a sales method for operation through a communications network that includes receiving customization commands from a first accountholder and receiving customization commands from a second accountholder. The method also includes steps of presenting a first sales interface through the network for the first accountholder based on the item categorization input received from the first accountholder, and presenting a second networked sales interface through the network for the second accountholder based on the item categorization input received from the second accountholder.

In preferred embodiments, the customization commands can include customizations of templates that each define display attributes of one or more views for the first and second sales interfaces. The customization commands can include a user arrangement of a plurality of user interface tokens to define display attributes for one or more views of the first sales interface. The customization commands can include a set of transaction attribute commands. The steps of presenting can present differently branded interfaces. The customization commands can include a user arrangement of a plurality of e-mail templates that each define display attributes of e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces. The customization commands can include an e-mail sender address selection to define a sender address for e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces.

Systems according to this aspect of the invention can provide flexible customization of sales systems that operate over a network. By providing customizing templates and/or tokens, such systems can allow site designers full control over the branding of their site pages and e-mail, while leaving the administration of these elements to a central system. And these customization features can be easily accessed through an ordinary web browser.

In an additional general aspect, the invention features a sales system for coupling to a communications network. The system includes an item database, and a first sales interface operative to offer items from the database for sale through a communications network. A bulk

upload interface is associated with the first sales interface and operative to upload lists of items from a plurality of different users into the database.

In preferred embodiments, the bulk upload interface can be operative to upload lists in a tabular delimited text format. The bulk upload interface can be operative to upload lists that include items in different categories and having different types of specifications in those categories. The system can further include at least one further sales interface operative to offer items from the database for sale through the communications network and further include a second bulk upload interface associated with the second sales interface and operative to upload lists of items from a plurality of different users into the database. The first and second bulk upload interfaces can be operative to upload lists that include items in different categories and having different types of specifications in those categories, and the first and second sales interfaces can be operative to list different subsets of the categories. The sales interface can be an auction interface, a classifieds interface, or a variable price sales interface. The sales interfaces can be provided by different web sites on a public communications network.

In another general aspect, the invention features a sales method for operation through a communications network that includes receiving a first list of sales items in electronic form from a user at a first sales interface and receiving a second list of sales items in electronic form from a user at a second sales interface. The method also includes the steps of storing the first and second lists, presenting a first subset of the items in the first and second lists at the first sales interface, and presenting a second subset of the items in the first and second lists at the second sales interface.

In preferred embodiments, the lists can be in a tabular delimited text format. The lists can include items in different categories and having different types of specifications in those categories. The sales interfaces can be auction interfaces. The sales interfaces can be provided by different web sites on a public communications network.

Systems according to this aspect of the invention can also provide an intuitive and highly powerful way of uploading large numbers of listings to a sales site. This feature can be particularly beneficial to frequent users of the system, such as merchants or collectors. Once such users have assembled an upload file for the types of items he or she is interested in, this file can serve as a template for new ones. And these files can each be uploaded at any time through a front-door interface without special treatment by the sales organization.

In addition, because the file is in an easily readable text-based format, it is possible to directly populate it with information from a wide variety of other programs. For example, it may be possible to translate exported inventory items from a legacy or small-business

accounting system into a delimited file that can then be reformatted into an upload file. And if such reformatting operations need to be performed frequently, they can be automated by relatively unsophisticated users with a spreadsheet macro that performs a simple series of textual manipulations, such as global substitutions.

In an additional general aspect, the invention features a sales system for coupling to a communications network, which includes a database including records for a plurality of sales items, an extraction module operative to extract a structured model of at least part of the database, and a static module operative to periodically generate a series of sales interface elements based on the structured model, and to store them in a storage system. A dynamic module is operative to retrieve item information directly from the database in response to specific requests from the network. A server is responsive to a network port to retrieve selected ones of the sales interface elements from the storage system in response to a first type of request received from the network, and to retrieve the item information from the dynamic module in response to a second type of request received from the network.

In preferred embodiments, the extraction module can be operative to extract the structured model as an object-oriented model. The extraction module can be operative to extract different sales interface elements for different sales systems. The extraction module can be operative to extract a plurality of hierarchical category models for different sales systems. The dynamic module can be operative to retrieve listing detail views in response to the requests. The static module can be operative to retrieve item category views. The static module can be operative to generate sales interface elements that include scripting language files. The scripting language files can be HTML files. The user interface elements can include auction user interface elements.

In another general aspect, the invention features a sales method for operation through a communications network. The method includes a storing a database of sales items, extracting a structured model of at least part of the database, and periodically generating a series of sales interface elements based on the structured model. The method also includes the steps of storing the sales interface elements, retrieving item information directly from the database in response to a first type of request from the network, and retrieving selected ones of the sales interface elements from storage in response to a second type of request received from the network.

In preferred embodiments, the step of extracting can extract the structured model as an object-oriented model. The step of extracting can extract different sales interface elements for different sales systems. The step of extracting can extract a plurality of hierarchical category models for different sales systems. The step of retrieving sales information can retrieve listing

detail views in response to the requests. The step of generating can generate item category views. The step of generating can generate scripting language files. The scripting language files can be HTML files. The user interface elements can include auction user interface elements, classifieds user interface elements, or variable price sales interface elements.

In a further general aspect, the invention features a sales system for coupling to a communications network, which includes a database including records for a plurality of sales items. Also included is a dynamic retrieval module that includes a database fragment retrieval module responsive to the database to retrieve information for a sales information fragment, and a customization module operative to customize the fragment for a particular user interface in response to a user request for the fragment from that interface.

In preferred embodiments, the system can further include a storage area for storing the fragment between user access requests. The storage area can be on a file server. The dynamic retrieval module can further include an update detection module operative to detect when information for a sales information fragment has changed. The database fragment can be for an item lot detail page for an auction system, a classifieds system, or a variable price sales system.

In another general aspect, the invention features a sales method for operation through a communications network, which includes retrieving information for a sales information fragment from a database, and customizing the fragment for different user interfaces after the step of retrieving, in response to user requests for the fragment from the different user interfaces.

In preferred embodiments, the method can further include the step of storing the fragment between user access requests. The step of storing can store the fragment on a file server. The method can further include the step of detecting when information for the sales information fragment has changed. The database fragment can be for an item lot detail page for an auction system, a classifieds system, or a variable price sales system.

Systems according to this aspect of the invention can operate efficiently using a two-part publishing subsystem. This subsystem retrieves a core set of regularly-accessed but slowly changing sales interface elements by updating them periodically, while retrieving real-time or near-real time information relating to individual items on an as-needed basis. This breakdown allows the system to offload a substantial burden from the database and thereby improve overall performance. This is especially important in large sales systems with large databases, such as network auction systems that allow cross-listing of items.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a network auction system according to the invention;

Fig. 2 is a flowchart illustrating the overall operation of the system of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a screen view of an illustrative auction network member site home page in the system of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a screen view of an illustrative auction site home page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 5 is a screen view of an illustrative category page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 6 is a screen view of an illustrative listing (or "leaf") page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 7 is a screen view of an illustrative lot detail page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 8 is a screen view of an illustrative bidder-to-seller e-mail entry page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 9 is a screen view of an illustrative bid entry page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 10 is a screen view of an illustrative bid confirmation page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 11 is a screen view of an illustrative watch list page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 12 is a screen view of an illustrative advanced search page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 13 is a screen view of an illustrative auction agent page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Figs. 14A and 14B are screen views of top and bottom parts of an illustrative listing information page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 15 is a screen view of an illustrative listing review page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 16 is a screen view of an illustrative listing confirmation page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 17 is a screen view of an illustrative mass upload page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 18A and 18B are screen views of top and bottom parts of an illustrative kiosk setup page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 19 is a screen view of an administration home page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 20 is a screen view of a user interface administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 21 is a screen view of a template maintenance page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 22 is a screen view of a template layout page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 23 is a screen view of a token maintenance page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 24 is a screen view of a token list page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 25 is a screen view of a token details page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 26 is a screen view of a category tree administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 27 is a screen view of the category tree administration page of Fig. 25 showing a detail pane for an illustrative parent-level category;

Fig. 28 is a screen view of the category tree administration page of Fig. 25 showing a category detail pane for an illustrative item-level category;

Fig. 29 is a screen view of the category tree administration page of Fig. 25 showing a specification detail pane for an illustrative specification;

Fig. 30 is a screen view of an e-mail module administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 31 is a screen view of an e-mail editing page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 32 is a screen view of an e-mail token description page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Figs. 33A and 33B are screen views of top and bottom parts of a listing options administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 34 is a screen view of a custom bid increment administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 35 is a screen view of a user options administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 36 is a screen view of a fee schedule administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 37 is a screen view of an auction fee schedule administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 38 is a screen view of a merchandising options administration page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 39 is a screen view of a merchandising option edit page for the network member site of Fig. 3;

Fig. 40 is a block diagram illustrating an overview of the implementation of the auction server system of Fig. 1;

Fig. 41 is a general block diagram illustrating data management portions the implementation of Fig. 40;

Fig. 42 is a general block diagram illustrating a data model for a publisher cache for the implementation of Fig. 40;

Fig. 43 is a flowchart illustrating an overview of the operation of the publisher for the implementation of Fig. 40;

Fig. 44 is a general block diagram illustrating output generation for a publisher cache for the implementation of Fig. 40;

Fig. 45 is a screen view of an administration control panel page for the auction server system; and

Fig. 46 is a state diagram illustrating the creation of a showcase area.

Detailed Description of an Illustrative Embodiment

Referring to Fig. 1, a network auction system 10 includes a series of member web sites M1, M2, ... MN and an auction server system 12, which are all operatively connected to a network such as the internet. As is conventional, each of the web sites includes a home page H1, H2, ... HN, and a series of sub-pages S11, S12, ... S21, S22, ... SN1, SN2, ... on which a legal entity, such as a corporation, provides content. The home pages and sub-pages are all linked together via a system of user-selectable hyperlinks L11, L12, ... L21, L22, ... LN1, LN2, which can be created using an appropriate scripting language, such as Hypertext Markup Language (HTML).

Users can access the home pages and sub-pages and navigate between them using a web browser that communicates with the web sites. As is well known, browsers allow the users to navigate between pages by following ("clicking on") links in the pages using a pointing device, such as a mouse. They also provide an address line that allows users to type in a page's

address, which is formatted according to an appropriate protocol such as Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) or File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

Each of the web sites in the network auction system 10 also includes one or more links LA1, LA2, ... LAN to one or more respective auction home pages A1, A2, ... AN. These auction home pages can, in turn, include links to auction sub-pages. Collectively, an auction home page and its sub-pages can be referred to as an auction site.

The pages for each of the auction sites are generated by the auction server system, but they give users the impression that they are still using the member web site through which they accessed the web page. Users get this impression partly because the auction server system 12 includes a network auction server 14 that generates highly customized auction pages that look and act like the pages of the web site from which they are accessed. The auction server system also interfaces with the network through an address that is consistent with the address of the member web site from which it is accessed (e.g., by DNS mapping of a subdomain name such as "auctions.membername.com"). In addition, the auction server can transact by e-mail with the user using the name of the entity responsible for the content of the web sites, such as in the case of customer service e-mails. And users can gain access to an auction system through the same registration process through which they register for access to its parent member site.

Referring to Fig. 2, the overall process of auctioning items begins with users entering listings for items into the auction pages of the auction network member sites W1, W2, ... WN. The auction server system 10 receives these listings, indexes them, and stores them centrally in its database system 16 (steps 20A, 20B, ... 20N). The items can then be offered on some or all of the auction pages (steps 22A, 22B, ... 22N).

Users can also bid on items on the auction pages of the auction network member sites W1, W2, ... WN. The auction server system receives the bids from the different auction sites, indexes them, and stores them in its database system 16 (steps 24A, 24B, ... 24N). Bids are stored as part of series of item bidding histories that are updated as auctions progress.

When the auction period has elapsed for an item (step 26), the auction server system 10 reviews the highest bid for that item. The system tests this bid against an optional reserve price set by the listing user (step 28). If the highest bid is below the reserve price, no award is made (step 30). It the reserve price is exceeded, the name of the winning bidder can be retrieved (step 32) and the item is awarded to him or her (step 34A, 34B ... or 34N).

Referring to Fig. 3, users can reach one of the auction pages (e.g., A1) by first viewing the home page H1 of an auction network member in their web browsers 40. This home page can include a link 42 to its associated auction page A1, as well as other material, such as

additional links, controls, and content. It is expected that many users will reach the auction page, at least the first time, by selecting a link on the network member home page. Users can also access the auction site directly, however, such as through a bookmark. And further links to the auction site can exist on pages other than the home page of the member site W1.

Referring to Fig. 4, the first auction page A1 includes a member logo area 50, a toolbar 52, a promotional feature link 54, two promotional auction areas 56, and a special auctions area 58. Below these features are a buyers link area 60, a sellers link area 62, an auctions search area 64, and a category browsing area 66. The rest of the page is a featured auctions list 68 in the form of a list of item names 70, with corresponding prices 72, numbers of bids 74, and end times 76.

The configuration of this page is customized by the organization responsible for the content of the rest of the first site W1 (e.g., the web site's web designer). The logo area 50 can therefore bear the same logo that is presented on the home page H1 of the site. The position and makeup of the remaining features is also selected by the organization to match its brand identity. The other pages in the auction site can also be customized.

Referring also to Fig. 5, the user can reach a category page 80 for a particular category of goods and services by following one of the category links in the category browsing area 66, or other similar links on other pages. Like other pages in the auction site, this page can include a logo 84 and a number of other features selected by the member organization. Such features can include an advertising message area 86, a toolbar 88, featured item areas 90, a featured merchant auctions area 92, and a related links area 94. The primary purpose of this page is to present a number of links 82A, 82B, ... 82N to subpages, which can either be subcategory ("drill-down") pages, or listing ("leaf") pages. The breakdown of goods and/or services into category pages, different levels of subcategories, and listing pages is customizable by the member organization. A site that sells primarily computers and only a few toys, for example, might present different types of computers in a complex tree of drill-down pages and present toys in a single category page.

Referring to Fig. 6, at the lowest level in the categorization hierarchy are listing pages, such as a "U.S. Coins" page 100. Like other auction subpages it can include a number of custom features, but it always includes a listing area 102. This area can be in the form of a list of items names 104, with corresponding prices 106, numbers of bids 108, and end times 110. If there are more than a predetermined number of items to be listed, the system presents additional pages, which can be reached using a page navigation control 112.

Referring also to Fig. 7, each item name in the listing pages is a link to a lot detail page 120. Each lot detail page can include a full item name 122, a listing information table 124, a product detail table 126, a seller information area 128, and a payment and shipping information area 130. The listing information table can include a listing type entry, a high bid entry, a number of bids entry, an opening bid entry, a bid increment entry, a time remaining entry, an open date entry, a close date entry, a quantity entry, and a listing number entry.

The product detail area 126 is item-specific, and includes a series of information items about the item. The seller information area provides the seller's username, and the type of the seller, such as "private party" or "merchant." Also provided are links to comments on the seller, other listings by the seller, and an page that allows a user to send an e-mail message to the seller (see Fig. 8). The payment and shipping area includes information about available payment and shipping methods. An "add to watch list" link, and a "bid now" button are also provided on the lot detail page.

Referring to Figs. 9 and 10, clicking on the "bid now" button in the lot detail page 120 reveals a bid entry page 140. This page includes an area in which the user may input a maximum bid. This amount is the maximum amount the user would like to bid for each item, and is kept confidential. The system includes automatic bidding software to automatically enter the lowest possible winning bid for the user, until his or her maximum bid is reached. This operation is similar to the absentee bidding procedure followed by many in-person auctions. The bid entry page also includes a review bid button 144, which causes the system to display a bid confirmation page 146 with information about the transaction and a confirmation button 148.

Some high-ticket items are placed for auction using a delayed bid system. These items are marked on the bid page with a message stating that bids over a certain amount are subject to confirmation by telephone. Because of the delay involved in confirming first time bidders, new bidders are not allowed to bid on delayed bid items in the last hour of an auction. Previously confirmed bidders may continue to bid until the close of the auction.

Referring to Figs. 11-13, there are at least three other ways to access listings using the system: through a watch list, by searching, and via an auction agent. Watch lists are personalized item lists that a user can use to track a number of items (see Fig. 11). Searching allows a user to generate a listing page by specifying a single search text string to be searched for (simple search), or by specifying text strings and/or values in a various item fields, including category-specific item specifications (advanced search—see Fig. 12). An auction agent is a program that runs a set of search criteria on new listings and informs the user, such as by e-

mail, when one matches the search criteria (see Fig. 13). Users can also review all their bids or all bidding activity for an item.

Referring to Figs. 14A and 14B, a user can list an item for sale by clicking on one of several "sell your item" links, such as one on the first auction page A1. The system will then allow the user to navigate a tree of categories and subcategories that is similar to the one for viewing items. When the user reaches a leaf page and selects an item type, the system prompts him or her to log in to the system. If it is his or her first time using the system, it will allow the user to enter biographical information, such as name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address, and obtain a new username and password. The system also allows the user to sign up for different types of e-mail notifications at this time, including notifications from the member site, notifications from sponsoring third parties, and notifications from merchants based on the system's e-mail transfer feature.

Once registered or signed on, the user can enter listing information in a listing information page 150. This page includes three general areas, a listing information area 152, a product information area 154, and a payment/shipping information area 156. The listing information area includes text boxes for entering a listing type, an auction type (English or Dutch), and a listing title. It also includes areas for entering a listing start date and time, a listing end date and time, and an available quantity. Areas for entering an opening bid, a reserve/threshold price, and a minimum quantity a user must purchase are provided as well. The listing information area can be the same for all items.

The product information area 154 includes a description field and an image URL field, which can be the same for all items. The product information area also includes a series of item-specific drop-down selection fields that allow the user to select one of a list of predetermined specification values. For US coins, for example, these include type (e.g., quarter, dime nickel, etc.), condition (proof, mint, etc.), and year. Other products will generally have different specification fields and different preset selections for those fields. Standardizing these specification fields allows the system to efficiently perform powerful searching and sorting for relevant aspects of an item type, without cluttering the system with unnecessary information.

The payment/shipping information area 156 includes a series of checkboxes for accepted payment types, a seller location text box, and a series of checkboxes for available shipping methods. These controls are the same for all items.

Referring also to Figs. 15 and 16, once the user has completed his or her input in the listing information page, he or she clicks on a review listing button 158. This button causes the

auction server system to display a review listing page 160. This page restates the user's listing information, and provides merchandising option controls 162 and a bidder requirements control 164. The merchandising option controls allow the user to select more prominent placement of items in the auction pages of the web site, for a fee. The bidder requirements option allows the user to specify whether a user must have a credit card to bid on the listing. A place listing button 168 allows the user to place the listing, which causes the system to present a listing confirmation page. This page offers the user the opportunity to place either a new listing by typing in new information, or a similar listing by editing a copy of the information for the last item.

Referring to Fig. 17, the user can also select a link to a mass upload page 170. The mass upload page includes a file specification area that allows the user to specify the location of a tab-delimited text file, which can be generated with a word processor, spreadsheet, or other program. The file should begin with a line of category headings, and each subsequent line should include values for these categories. In one embodiment, the categories are:

Listing Type

To run the listing as an English auction, there should be an "A" in this field. For a "Dutch" auction, there should be a "D" in this field.

Category Number

The category number is a number that corresponds to the category being listing under, and is available from lists that can be accessed through a list link.

Listing Title

This is the title that buyers will see when they search for or browse listings. In one embodiment, the length of this title is 100 characters.

Available Quantity

This is the total number of units available in the listing. If the user has 75 items available, for example, he or she will enter 75 in this field. When listing an item in a Dutch auction, this value must be larger than one.

Minimum Purchase Quantity

This is the minimum number of units available to each buyer. If the user has 75 items listed, but doesn't want to ship orders of less than 15, then he or she should enter a 15 in this field. If he or she wants to ship the entire listing as a single order, then he or she should enter 75.

Opening Bid/Price

This is the starting bid per unit for the auction. If the user sets the minimum purchase quantity to 60 and the opening bid to $5, for example, the extended total is $300 for the lowest possible initial bid. If the user is placing a classified ad, his or her desired price should be entered in this field.

Reserve/Threshold Price/Negotiability

This field determines the minimum price at which the user agrees to sell the product, and must be greater than or equal to opening bid. If a user wants to start the bidding for an item at $6 per unit, but doesn't want to sell them for less than $15 per unit, he or she would enter six for the opening bid and 15 for the reserve price. This field should remain blank for a Dutch auction, or if the user doesn't want to set a reserve price.

Listing Start Date

This field defines the date on which the listing will be open.

Listing Start Hour

This is the hour on the start date at which the listing will open. It is preferable to require users to wait an hour before their listings appear, to allow them time to review each listing for accuracy. After the start date, a user cannot retract his or her listing.

Listing End Date

This is the last day a listing will appear. The maximum duration for an auction in one embodiment is 60 days.

Listing End Hour

This is the hour at which a listing will close.

Item URL

If the item can be illustrated by an existing picture on the web, viewers can be referred to it by entering a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that points to it. Images can also be uploaded to the server.

Item Description

This field allows a user to list information such as a detailed technical specification, warranty, and exact packaging.

Weight

This field is for the weight of the item.

Specification Fields

These are values for the item-specific specification fields, in order, and are entered as text. There can also be a re-list field allowing the user to specify repetitive automatic re-listing of an item.

Once the user has assembled his or her listing file, he or she can upload it to the auction server system. The system will then merge the file into the database as a series of listing items.

Referring to Figs. 18A and 18B, sellers can also create personalized auction areas known as kiosks. Kiosks can be created using a kiosk creation page 180. This page allows the user to create a page at a customizable address with custom features, such as a seller logo, html content, and list of auction items listed by that user.

Sellers can also use a number of customizable pages to manage other aspects of their transactions such as shipment and payment defaults, images, and default tracking sort criteria (not shown).

When an item is awarded, the auction server system sends the winner an e-mail message, which can bear the member organization's name, informing him or her that he or she has won the item. It also records charges for any transaction fees resulting from the transaction. This information is aggregated and periodically transferred to the member site by ftp for billing purposes.

Referring to Fig. 19, client organizations have access to an administration module generated by the auction server system. This module can be accessed via a web browser over a secure connection. A password and user ID are required to access the administration module, and password access is managed through session cookies.

Different levels of access can be made available to different users. In one embodiment, there are four different levels of administration users with different levels of access:

Administration

Administration users have access to all functionality contained in the administration module and are the only user group that can define other users. The initial user ID for an organization will be an administration level user ID.

Listing Maintenance

Users in this group have access to listing maintenance.

Reports

Users in this group only have access to reporting functionality

Site Setup

Users in this group have access to the site setup.

There are also two higher levels of access for the administrative users at the auction server site. The first is known as the network administrator level and provides administration-level privileges for all member sites and allows the user to run reports on the aggregate network data. The second is known as the control level, and it allows the user to create a new site, manage the base category tree, run network reports, perform accounting tasks, manage invalid words (e.g., obscenity, words relating to counterfeiting), create a showcase that allows users to distribute listings from one merchant site to another, run fraud protection modules (e.g. to detect aliasing to beat bad ratings), universal searches (e.g., for customer service), and listings management (e.g., for customer service to close a listing) (see Fig. 45).

There are several options when setting up a new user. If the user has already been registered on the front end and they need access to the administration module, an existing administration user can follow an "Add Previously Registered User" link. For a completely new user, an administration user can follow an "Add New User Link." These links lead to pages on which an administration user can provide a new user's biographical information, assign them an initial password, assign them to a user group, and save the resulting account profile. To modify an existing user's administration account, the administration user can simply click on a name link for that user from a list of administration users for the site.

Referring also to Figs. 20 and 21, administration users can design the user interface for their sites through modular user interface functionality that is available on a user interface page that can be accessed through a user interface link in an administration home page in their administration module. At the top of the user interface page there is a link to page templates. This link leads to a template maintenance page.

The modular functionality is based on a tiered setup. The top tier consists of a series of templates (e.g., twelve of them). A template is provided for each distinctly different page that makes up the auction page. By clicking on any one of the template names, the user will be shown a layout area for that template. This layout area is equivalent to the second tier of the functionality. Each layout area consists of scripting code, such as HTML code, and tokens. The scripting code can be used to control the look and feel of the page, and the tokens represent auction-specific information that is fundamental to the page.

The tokens make up the third tier of the modular functionality. They are objects that each represent a section of the auction member site. In one embodiment, there are approximately 80 of them. Tokens can be selected and pieced together to create a large number of customizations to an auction site. In addition, each token is itself customizable. New custom tokens can also be created.

Referring to Fig. 22, each of the templates represents a style of page that is seen on the auction web site. They are:

Default

This template is used for all pages not controlled by the other templates. All auction-specific information is represented by one token – the FMContent token. Examples of default pages include: "Help for Buyers," "Terms and Conditions," etc.

Home

This is the sites main auction page (e.g., A1), and will typically be set up like the member site's current home page, but it can be customized in any suitable way. Common elements would include the site header, a search option, categories, and featured listings.

Category

This page is used to display the different levels of the category tree. The browse category tree is usually accessed through the home page and the search listings page.

Leaf

This is a listing page that will be used to show the actual listings that are under one or more category pages. For example, a leaf page entitled "Hewlett Packard®" might be found under a sequence of two category pages entitled "Computers" and "Desktops."

Lot Detail

This page shows the Listing information such as Start and End time, seller info, shipping info, time remaining to bid, how many bids, and what the current winning bid is. This is where bidding occurs.

Secure

This template is used for any pages that are shown on the secure server, such as credit card information, customer information, etc.

FAQ's

This page will house a list of Frequently Asked Questions, that will be tokenized so as to provide both the implementation manager and the site administrator a simple, intuitive way to update FAQ's and other help topics. Some parts of the FAQs are dynamic, which allows new sections to be added automatically by the system if new functions are added by member sites. This also allows the system to automatically update a specific section if the functionality that section describes is enhanced by the auction server system.

Search

Layout for the static search page. This page allows the user to determine the exact placement of the numerous searches that are provided.

Place

Layout for the main "place a listing" static page. This page allows a user to fully customize how his or her site's main "place a listing" page will look, and will ultimately determine how its listing placement process will flow.

Featured

Layout for the featured listings page. This page allows the user to control the look and feel of his or her featured listings page.

Member

This template controls the layout for kiosk pages. This allows the member site administrator to determine the general look and feel of the kiosk pages and how they will flow to and from the parent site.

SubPlace

This is the template that controls the second tiered pages of the listing placement process.

The layout of each of these sections will initially default to the classic auction style with a navigational column on the left side of the pages. This layout can be customized, however, by altering the scripting code on the templates in a template editing window in a layout page for that template. The layout pages allow users to see what tokens are present on the page, and where these tokens are placed. By altering the layout of each template, the user can change the overall look and feel of groups of pages on the member site. Similarly, by changing the location of the tokens and the code around them, users can move specified items around in the confines of the groups of pages.

The tokens can include text, scripting language, such as HTML or ASP, and/or calls to auction system functionality. They can also include references to other tokens. The tokens represent parts of the page that are moveable or customizable, and they each correspond with either a section or sections of the auction site. For example, there is a token for the search functionality. This token can be altered to place the search functionality on the bottom of the page, thus altering the look of the page. The page template with the new layout is then saved with all the relevant new information, causing the corresponding page or pages to be changed on the live auction site.

Referring to Fig. 23, users can manage tokens from a token maintenance page. This page includes a token navigation list bar and a token editing window. The token navigation list bar allows the user to select one of the available tokens to be listed in the token editing window, where its content can be edited. New tokens can be created by following a new token link to a token creation page and providing parameters for the new token.

Referring to Fig. 24 and 25, the user can also reach a token list page that lists all available tokens in a link format. Actuating a token name in this view takes the user to a token details page, which lists the name, description, and value for the token.

An illustrative list of tokens is presented below. These tokens are broken down into five groups: I) auction server system page-specific tokens, II) auction server system non-page-specific tokens, III) member site tokens, IV) tokens for a new member site template, and V) configurable listing box related tokens. The user can override these tokens with an asterisk (*).

I. Auction Server System Page Specific Tokens

FMAdRefNo

Category specific advertisement reference number defined by site. This token is used to target an advertising server. It is placed where at a location normally used pass values to an advertising server. The values for this token are defined in the product category functionality.

FMCatContentBox

This listings box appears on the listing pages and displays the featured merchant listings. This ContentBox is controled by the auction server system.

FMCategories

The selectable category links that appear on category browse page and are used by the end user to navigate through the category tree.

FMCatFeaturedListings

The listings box that appears on the lowest level category browse page. A merchandising option can be set up to allow end users to place listings in this listing box.

FMCatListings

The listings box for the main set of listings associated with a category.

FMCatNavLinks

Links for navigating between category leaf pages if there is more than one category leaf page. They are usually at the bottom of the page.

FMCatPromoText

Promotional text for a specific category that appears on the leaf page or browse page for that category. The content of this token is defined in the product category functionality.

FMCatRefNo

Category-specific reference number defined by site that allows an administration user to dynamically identify what category the user is in. This token is used to link to dynamic information on a main site that is related to the category.

FMHomePageListings

The listings box that appears on the home page. A merchandising option can be set up to allow users to place listings in this listing box.

FMListingKey

This token provides listing key icons and links to help pages. Usually found at the bottom of the page.

FMLotActionItems

A group of action-oriented links, including bid now, seller info, shipping and payment terms, etc. These are found directly underneath the listing detail information.

FMLotInfo

This is a table of basic information for a listing, including opening and closing time, price, seller name, etc.

FMLotSellerInfo

This is a table of seller information for a lot that lists all relevant info on the seller of the item. Found on the lot detail page.

FMLotShipPayInfo

This is a table of shipping and payment information for a listing. It is found on the lot detail page.

FMMainCategories

This is a table of top level categories for navigating to lower levels. These are the main categories that are seen on the home page.

FMPageContent

On default auction pages, this is the page that contains all generic content.

FMSiteCatNo

This is the site-specific category number that is alotted to each site by the network for identification reasons.

FMTimeStamp

This token provides the date and time that the information on the page was last published.

II. Auction Server System Non-Page Specific Tokens

*FMAdvancedSearchLink

This is a link to the advanced search page. This link is usually present next to the general keyword search.

*FMAuctionAgentLink

This is a link to the auction agent page. This link is usually present in the navigation menu.

*FMBuyerHelpLink

This is a link to buyer help. This link is usually present in the navigation menu.

*FMCatBullet

This is a token for the category emphasis bullet.

*FMDefFont

This is a token that holds the default font style tag.

*FMDefFontFace

This is a token that holds the default font face.

*FMDivColor

This is the color that makes up the divider bars on the auction pages.

*FMDivTextColor

This is the color that makes up the text in the divider bars.

*FMEscrowLink

This is a token that holds the link to the escrow services page. It is usually found in the navigation menu.

*FMFAQsLink

This is a link to FAQs page. It is usually found in the navigation menu.

*FMHorizontalLine

This is a token that draws a horizontal line the width of the page for divider purposes.

*FMLargeFont

Large font tag.

*FMLeftColWidth

This is a token that specifies the default left column width.

*FMListingFeeLink

This is a link to the listing fees page. It is usually found on the navigation menu bar.

*FMLogoutLink

This is a link to release a use cookie and return to home page.

*FMLotSpecInfo

This link defines the various specification of a lot for sale.

FMMenuBar

This is a token that makes up the base navigational menu bar.

*FMMyAccountLink

This is a link to the my account page.

*FMMyNewAuctionLink

This is a link to the new auction site setup page.

FMPageTitle

This is a token that makes up the application generated page title.

*FMPageTitleBar

This is a token that makes up the descriptive page title bar.

*FMPageWidth

This token sets the default page width.

*FMPlaceListingLink

This is a link to the place a listing page.

*FMRightColWidth

This token sets the default right column width.

*FMSearchBox

This token consists of the standard lot title search box with submit button.

*FMSearchListingLink

This token houses a link to the locate listings page.

*FMSecSideBar

This is a token that sets up the standard vertical navigation bar on secure pages.

*FMSellerHelpLink

This is a link to the seller help page. Usually located on the vertical navigation bar.

*FMSideBar

This is a token that sets up the standard vertical navigation bar.

*FMSignupLink

This is a link to the new customer registration page. It is usually located on the Vertical Navigation bar.

FMSiteName

This is a token that holds the registered name of the auction site.

*FMTermsLink

This is a link to the customer terms page. It is usually located on the vertical navigation bar.

*FMUploadLink

This is a link to the upload listings page. This is found in the my account section.

*FMWatchListLink

This is a link to the watch list page. This is usually found in the my account section.

FMwebAddress

This is a token that holds the web site address.

FMMenuSeparator

This is a token that holds the separator string to use between menu items.

FMDefFontSize

This is a token that defines the default font size for the site.

FMDefFontColor

This is a token that defines the default font color for the site.

FMDefFont

This is a token that defines a default token for the site.

III. Member Site Tokens

*BottomRight

This is the HTML following auction page content specifying the footer of a member site. Used in standard auction format.

*HomePageText

This is the HTML that will appear on the home page.

*MetaText

This is the MetaText tag.

*SecBottomRight

This is the HTML following auction page content on secure page.

*SecTopLeft

This is the HTML preceding auction page content on secure page.

*TopLeft

This is the HTML preceding auction page content that represents the header and left hand column of a member site. Used in standard auction format.

VI. Tokens for New Member Site Template

FMMemberHeader

If a kiosk site, this is the kiosk header established by the site. Otherwise, it is a standard black bar with a link back to the main site.

FMMemberTitle

This is the name of the member site.

FMMemberSiteProfile

This is the member's site profile.

FMMemberHomePageText

This is the member's home page text.

V. Configurable Listing Box Related Tokens

FMListingHeader

This is a token that holds the layout defining listing box header.

FMListingBody

This is a token that holds the layout defining listing box record format.

FMListingFooter

This is a token that holds the layout defining listing box footer.

FMMerchantImg

User-defined image for merchant listings.

FMLotLink

The HREF for a listing page.

FMLotTitle

The title of a listing.

FMLotPhotoImg

A token that defines the image to use if a listing has a photo.

FMLotTypeImg

A token defining an image for the particular listing type. There is an administration part to the implementation of this token.

FMLotPrice

The current minimum bid amount for a listing.

FMLotEndDate

The ending date for a listing.

FMLotNumBids

The number of bids for the listing.

Referring to Fig. 26-28, a product categories module allows a site administrator to set up his or her site category ontology quickly and easily. When the site is first set up, the category ontology can be empty, or it can inherit the auction server system base category tree.

The product categories module is controlled by a category tree page. This page includes a tree frame on the left and a details pane on the right. The user can use the tree frame to navigate through the category ontology. In order to expand or contract each category folder, the user can click on a + or - box next to each category. To see details about each category in the details window, the user can click on the underlined category name in the tree.

There are two types of categories—parent level categories and product (or item) level categories. Parent level categories are defined by folder icons and product level categories are defined by a page icon. A parent level category is defined as a category that can contain other categories. A product level category is defined as the lowest level category in an ontology—the one that will contain the actual product listings. An administrative user can create as many levels in a category ontology as he or she needs. If the ontology is empty, the user can click on an "Add New Top Level Category" link to begin the tree.

Clicking on the "Add New Top Level Category" link or "Add a Sub-Category" link will cause the system to prompt the user with an add a new category entry form. This form can include the following fields:

Name

The name of the category that will appear on the site when users browse through the categories.

Description

A category description that will appear on the site next to the category in a promotional layout.

Allow Products

Clicking "yes" will define the category as a product level category. Clicking "no" will define the category as a parent level category.

Promotional Text

If this category is a parent level category, this text (or HTML) will appear the column opposite of the children categories when the user clicks on this category link. If this category is a product level category, this text will appear at the bottom of the page.

Email Promotion Text

This field contains upselling information for bid winner in notification email. Promotion text can only be edited for leaf nodes in category tree.

Category Ref. No.

This field is defines a tag value pair that can be used to dynamically link with other sections of the member site. For instance, to initiate a search for product reviews based on the product level category, the user can set up this field to provide the input parameters for the search script.

Ad Ref No.

This field is similar to the category ref no. but is used to pass a tag value pair to an advertisement serving engine, allowing the member site to target advertising based on the category the user is browsing.

Status

To allow the category to be displayed to the member site's user base, the used button is clicked.

Once created, categories can be modified or deleted. To modify a category, the user can click on the category name in the category tree and use a modify link. To delete a category, the same procedure is followed, but with a delete link. A category that has sub-categories or products associated with it cannot be deleted. If this presents a problem, such as if a product line is temporarily unavailable for auction, the user can change the status of the category to not used.

Product specifications can be added to each product level category. When users enter a product listing for that category, they will be prompted to enter values in the product specification fields. The user can also click on an "add specification" link at the bottom of the product category detail page to add a product specification. At this point, the user will be prompted with the add a new specification form. This form can include the following fields:

Specification Name

The name of the specification as it will appear to the users of the member site when they look at a listing detail page or enter a listing.

Data Type

A string value can be used to create an alphanumeric field and a number value to create a numeric field.

Input Style

Free text input gives the user the ability to enter any value into the field. Single selection will prompt the user with a drop down menu.

Default Values

This field is only used if single selection is chosen for the input style. The values in this field will appear in the drop down menu.

Target

Either "Product" if the specification is to be associated with the product table in the database or "Listing" if the specification is to be associated with the listing table in the database. For example, a manufacturer would be a specification associated with the product whereas a condition specification would be associated with the listing. This field is for internal use only and has no impact on the end user.

Input Required

Determines whether a specification is to be a required field during the place a listing process. Clicking no will cause the specification to be displayed during the place a listing process, but will not be required.

Status

Clicking the button will cause the specification to be displayed to end users.

Referring to Figs. 28 and 29, existing specifications will appear at the bottom of the product category detail page. To view its specification, the user can click on a specification name in the table. This will take him or her to the specification detail page.

Categories created with the categories module can be mapped to auction system server categories. This allows a member site export its listings in those categories to other member auction sites and to import their listings, even if they are named differently on the different sites. For example, products entered as "notebooks" on one site could be presented as "laptops" on another site.

To map a product level category, the user clicks on a "map to a category" link from the product level category detail page. This link will only appear for categories that have not yet been mapped. Clicking on the link will present the user with the auction server system base category ontology. The user can then search through this ontology to find the server system product level category that best matches the member site product level category.

Because categories may not match exactly, the module allows users to specify mapping specifications that act like filters. For example: a user may have a product level category called "spreadsheets, " but the server system categories list only "software." In such an instance, the user will be able to map the spreadsheets in the system's software category to his or her narrower category by specifying a filter based on the specifications for that category.

When a user maps to an auction server system category, the user category automatically inherits the specifications from the auction server system category. This allows users to perform specification-based searches for similar items across the whole auction network. Inherited specifications can also be deleted, or their can be mapping removed. Names of the specifications can be changed as well.

Referring to Figs. 30-32, each site is provided with standard e-mail messages. To customize them, the user can click on links to them in an e-mail module page. The user can then change the text of the e-mail as necessary in an e-mail editing page. The user can also move, but preferably should not delete, a series of variables, which can be enclosed in percentage signs and brackets. These variables draw data from the database and provide important information to end users. The e-mail tokens are described on an e-mail token description page accessible from a view e-mail tokens link.

A "from name" entry can also be customized to specify the e-mail's return address. If the organization running the auction server is taking care of the member's customer service, this entry may be listed as "membercompany@acutionservercompany.com." Alternatively, the from address can omit any mention of the server organization's name, such as auctions@membercompany.com, but replies to such messages generally need to be redirected to the auction server system company's e-mail address.

Referring to Figs. 33 and 34, the server system includes a listing options page that allows a user to choose from a number of different listing options. A first is a transaction type option area that allows the user to limit his or her site to one or more transaction types, such as English auctions, Dutch auctions, quick-win auctions, and classifieds. Classifieds are a brief advertisement offering property, goods or services, for a fixed price or best offer price. English auctions are publicly-held sales at which property, goods or services are sold to the highest bidder. Dutch auctions are auctions for listings of multiple items, in which the winners pay the lowest winning bid price. Quick-win auctions are auctions for listings of single items, in which the listing is immediately closed if the reserve price is met. Other types of transactions can also be handled by the system.

A second listing option is to enable e-mail transfer. This option allows users to submit their e-mail address to merchants during the bidding process, who can then contact users about related listings or specials. If the user chooses to enable the e-mail transfer function he or she can enter a rate (amount per email address) that will be charged to the merchant. This can be accomplished by clicking on a link that appears once the option is set, and entering a rate in a rate box on an e-mail transfer page, which also includes a list of reports sold.

Administration users can select an option allowing sellers to perform bulk uploads. They can also select an option allowing sellers to automatically relist their auction lot and specify the maximum length, in days, of an auction and classifieds. The administration user can specify the default length, in days, of auctions and classifieds as well.

The listing options page also allows the user to set up bid increments in a bid increment table. The user can choose from a default bid increment table, which is based on industry standards, or a custom table. Bid increments are a function of the reserve price. If there is no reserve price, the bid increment is a function of the opening bid. Each member site can allow its users to control the bid increment per listing. When using this option, it is preferable to set a maximum bid increment as well.

The system also allows users to amend and/or set their their own terms and conditions on a listing page. These will appear above the auction server system's standard service terms. The terms can be drafted using HTML.

Referring to Fig. 35, the administration module can also display a user options page. This page allows the user to specify whether to require a credit card to post listings or to bid, and to specify the types of credit cards accepted.

The user options page also allows the user to specify minimum ratings to post listings. This allows control over the quality of sellers. Bid winners have the ability to rate the seller. If

a seller receives poor ratings and they drop below a predetermined number, they will be unable to post listings on the member site.

Referring to Fig. 36 and 37, the user can also set the fee structures for buying and selling on his or her site through a fee schedule page with links to specific fee schedule pates, such as an auction fee schedule page. He or she can charge a flat fee or a percentage on any of the following:

Auction Listing Fee

The fee charged to a user to place a listing up for sale as an auction

Classifieds Listing Fee

The fee charged to a user to place a listing up for sale as a classified

Seller Transaction Fee

the fee charged to a seller if the listing is sold successfully

Buyer Transaction Fee

The fee charged to the buyer if the listing is sold successfully

Member and/or server sites can also share fees based on which site finds the buyer and/or which site finds the seller.

In one embodiment, members can provide information about users, such as their e-mail addresses, to other members for a fee. This fee can be transferred electronically by the auction server system.

The system provides a number of reports to its users. These are assembled from copies of the database that are made on a regular basis (e.g., nightly). Links to third-party network activity reports are also supported. Reports are stored at locations accessed through scrambled URLs.

Administration users have the ability to edit the listings placed on their sites. If listings are still in the upcoming state, they can edit them in their entirety, change their images, and even delete them before they go live. After listings open, administration users may only edit descriptions associated with the listings, change listing images, or close listings.

The re-list function allows a user to easily place listings. This tool prompts the user to perform a search for recently placed listings, such as by listing number, listing status, listing

start date, or product name. From a search results page, the user can then select the listings to be re-listed and enter a date for the newly copied listings to open. The listings selected in this manner will be copied and give a status of upcoming. The user may edit the new listing before the listing opens.

An e-mail listings function allows an administration user to build a file of listings that will be sent to all his or her end users who have requested email notifications of specials. Like the re-list function, this function can be accessed through a search results interface.

The system allows administrative users to add new kiosk users and update the user information of an existing kiosk user. They can also define various kiosk parameters, including a kiosk header area, which is an area defined by HTML parameters on the top of the kiosk page and at the top of the kiosk administration panel. Its specification can consist of one image, multiple images, images and text size, body background and text link colors. The header can be any size, but preferably no more than 634 pixels in width.

The kiosk fee schedule page allows a user to set up pricing schemes that will be put into effect on his or her site. Separate rates can be charged to the user whether they are fees for placing a listing, fees for placing a classified, or simply buyer and seller transaction fees. The fee structure can be non-existent, can be one standard price per interaction, or can be a tiered structure that varies the costs incurred on the user based upon the price at which the user's auction closed.

Referring to Figs. 38 and 39, administration users can also set up the merchandizing options for their auction site. These can be accessed through a merchandizing options page, which provides a create link as well as a list of links to individual option pages. These option pages allow users to set the parameters for individual merchandising options of different types, including auction base listings, classifieds base listings, home page listings, bold listings, weekly e-mail promotions, listings featured on group pages, or listings featured on parent pages.

Referring to Fig. 40, the implementation of a publicly available auction server system is scalable to allow it to efficiently serve a number of auction sites, which each have a variable number of end users. In one embodiment, it is implemented with a cluster of computers that includes a database server connected to a file server and a number of web servers. Critical applications are multithreaded where practical to allow for the use of multiprocessor computers. In one embodiment, the clusters run the Microsoft Windows NT® operating system, but other operating platforms, such as UNIX® or MAC-OS®, could also be used. The servers run Microsoft® Internet Information Server software. Programming languages used in the system

include Symantec Visual Café, Microsoft® Visual Basic, HTML and ASP. The database is implemented using a Microsoft® SQL server.

Referring to Fig. 41, the auction server system includes an important module called the publisher subsystem ("publisher"). The publisher is a piece of the auction server system that creates entire web pages or building blocks for pages before they are requested by end users. This improves the response time of these pages and reduces the load on the main database. In one embodiment it is implemented using Java, VisiBroker Object Request Broker, available from Inprise Corporation of Scotts Valley, California.

The publisher is made up of two separate programs, a program called the lot publisher and a program called the web page publisher. The lot publisher creates the lot detail fragments and notifies the search subsystem of changes to the live database (i.e., new or changed listing records). The web page publisher creates all other pages.

The web page publisher consists of three pieces: a component that scans the live auction database for changed records, a cache, and multiple writer threads that create web pages from the cache. Most of these pages are written to the file server, although the home pages for each site are written to the web servers.

Referring also to Fig. 42, the publisher's memory cache contains an object model representation of the live auction database. This structure is created when the publisher begins execution and is modified each time that the publisher retrieves changed records from the live database in a process known as object-relational mapping. The object-oriented model is a structured representation of the data that can be accessed efficiently in generating the pages and fragments.

Each object also contains a so-called dirty bit that indicates whether it has changed since the last time that the publisher executed. The dirty bits are used by the various page writing threads to indicate whether a new page must be created. Each page is governed by several dirty bits, which form part of the internal description of the page that is maintained by the publisher. Once all pages are written, all of the dirty bits are cleared before the next pass through the live database.

Referring also to Fig. 43 and 44, the publisher scans the live auction database for any records (except user information) that have changed since its last pass across the database. It reads all of these records, incorporates them into its memory representation of the data, and invokes its writer threads. The rules that dictate what pages must change in response to changed database records are contained directly in the Java code within the publisher.

On startup, all dirty bits are set and the publisher must therefore create a copy of each web page. Once the system is running, however, the publisher only creates pages that have changed as a result of database changes. Home pages are an exception to this rule, as home pages for each site are unconditionally created each time the publisher runs. The publisher creates a single copy of each site's home page, and this copy is then replicated and copied to all of the web servers by a script called RepliMonster. This script invokes a Microsoft component called RoboCopy.

The web publisher runs continuously. It periodically scans the database for changed records, invokes multiple page writer threads to create pages, and goes back to the database for the next round of changes. Under typical operational loads, this means that the publisher updates pages approximately every ten minutes, but the scan period can vary. Sites can be grouped by priority, so that some are processed more frequently than others.

When an end user accesses a client's auction site, various pages are delivered in response to user requests. A typical interaction involves a user browsing through the category tree looking for a certain type of item. Each of the requests generated by this activity can be fulfilled by sending existing pages from the file server directly back to the user.

When a user requests information about a specific item, a lot publisher Active Server Pages (ASP) script is invoked with the item number and other details as input parameters. This script assembles the requested page on the fly using the site's lot page template, the page menu HTML fragment, the lot detail fragment (stored on the file server), and token information specific to each site. The site-specific information is stored in server memory where it was loaded from the live database as part of server updates.

The lot detail fragment is a representation of the information on a lot detail page that is not customized for viewing on any particular site. When a lot detail page is requested for a particular auction site, this information is customized for viewing on that site. The fragment is then left on the file server, in case it is needed again—either by the same server or a different server. If the information in the fragment has not changed in the database, the fragment can be reused. This feature can take pressure off of the database.

The following table lists the different types of pages created by the publisher. This table also indicates how many pages are created for each type for each site, where these pages are stored, and whether the publisher output varies by site.

Page type	What	How many	Destination	Does publisher

	publisher creates	pages per site	(where publisher places pages)	output vary with each site?
Home page	HTML	1	web server (indirectly – see Note a)	Yes
Main search page	HTML	1	File server	Yes
Main place page	HTML	1	File server	Yes
"drill down" pages for browsing	HTML	Multiple (Note b)	File server	Yes
"drill down" pages for placing items for sale	HTML	Multiple (Note b)	File server	Yes
Category map for browsing	HTML	1	File server	Yes
Category map for placing items for sale	HTML	1	File server	Yes
"leaf" pages	HTML	Multiple (Note c)	File server	Yes
Lot detail page fragment (Note d)	Tagged text that is interpreted when the lot detail pages are built	Multiple (Note e)	File server	NO
Menu page (ingredient of lot detail page)	HTML fragment	Multiple (Note e)	File server	Yes (Note f)

Table 1 – Pages Created by Publisher

Notes on Table 1:

(a) The publisher places each site's home page on a replication server that in turn transfers the home page onto all existing web servers. Additional web servers can be added to the configuration without modifying the publisher.

(b) The number of "drill down" or category subpages depends on the size and structure of the category tree. This number is different for each site.

(c) The number of "leaf" pages also depends on the size and structure of the category tree. This number also differs for each site.

(d) Lot detail page fragments are created by the lot publisher program. All other page types are created by the web page publisher program.

(e) A lot detail page is created for each item currently available for sale. The publisher does not create lot detail pages for each site. Instead, these pages are assembled only when created, using publisher output (lot detail page plus menu page) as well as other template and token information.

(f) Menus differ from site to site because of different category trees, separator characters, and fonts used to display the information.

There are three database record types that are particularly important to the publisher because of their effects on the form and content of the pages that it creates: item records, category records, and site information records. Item records are records that are created in an item table in the database each time a new item is offered for sale, and closed each time an item is sold. Item records include fields that affect the leaf pages and lot detail pages. Closing an item record indicates to the publisher that it should remove it from its database, and indicates to the search module that it should do the same to its database. The publisher also creates a revised version of a lot detail page once an item has been sold so that users who access the pages through a path other than leaf pages will see that the item is no longer available. Bidding causes slight changes to both leaf pages and lot detail pages.

New or changed category records modify the size and shape of the category tree for a site. These changes in turn affect the appearance of the so-called drill-down pages as well as the menu fragments that appear on several types of pages.

Site Information Records are the records are created by administration users using the administration module. Site information changes can affect the appearance of all pages.

Instead of using a predefined hierarchy to locate items, a user might use the auction server system's search subsystem. This subsystem is similar to the publisher in that it maintains a database of currently available items and delivers lists of items in response to user requests. It differs from the publisher in that the publisher uses predefined criteria (each site's category tree) and creates pages (except lot detail pages) before they are requested, while the search subsystem relies on user-specified criteria and creates the listing pages only when they are requested. Note that the page construction logic for each site exists in both search and the publisher.

The search subsystem is implemented as a Structured Query Language (SQL) database, although other implementations are possible, such as full-text index. Each user search request is translated into an SQL query on this database. In one embodiment, there are five identical search boxes to provide adequate capacity for user load.

The search subsystem depends on the publisher for information about changes to the database. In particular, the lot publisher writes a record into a file for each lot detail page that it creates. When all writer threads have completed execution, the file is sent to the search subsystem.

Like the publisher, the search subsystem performs three types of operations. Listing new items for sale results in new records in the search SQL database. Items that have changed (new high bid, etc) cause existing records to be modified. Items that have been sold appear in the file as modified records (status is closed). The search subsystem will change the status of these records accordingly, but they can be thought of as disappearing from the search database because search queries will never find them.

Depending on access patterns, it may be possible to publish pages selectively based on anticipated demand. In such an embodiment, the publisher creates pages that are likely to be accessed before the fact, but defers other pages until and unless they are requested. The publisher can also be configured to generate views of the data in formats other than scripted pages, such as text or bitmaps. In one embodiment, auction information is distributed by pager.

The search subsystem and publisher could also be combined. In such an embodiment, the search subsystem can search its database for items that meet a user's search criteria but feed this information back to the publisher for actual page creation.

Although the system described above is implemented using a particular combination of hardware and software, other implementations are also possible. System elements can be built using special-purpose hardware, software running on a general-purpose processor, or a combination of both. In addition, while the system can be broken into the series of modules and

functional groupings shown, one of ordinary skill in the art would recognize that it is also possible to combine them and/or split them to achieve a different breakdown.

It is contemplated that information about user preferences can be gleaned from their interactions with the auction system. This information can be used to generate advertising tailored to the individual user. It is also contemplated that advertising space could be reserved on the auction pages and filled on an auction-network-wide basis. Revenue from this advertising could be shared between the auction system and member systems.

In addition, while an auction system with classified capabilities was presented as an illustrative embodiment, other sales models, such as reverse auctions, requests for proposals (RFP's), "wanted to buy," and coupons, can also be provided using the same approach. Like the auction system, such systems can employ a customized interface to bring offerors and buyers/respondents together through a network of member sites, and facilitate transactions between them.

The auction network has the ability to take listings from one network site and promote them on another network site. In one embodiment, this is set up by auction server system personnel through a distributed merchandising area interface that interacts with the publisher, although an automated end user interface could also be provided.

A merchandising area (or showcase area) can contain either a group of listings or scripting commands. Each merchandising area is linked to a token that can be distributed to any site on the network. Merchandising areas can be distributed at the site level or the page level, depending on the type of token. When a site's user interface is built using the template/token tool, these merchandising tokens are placed into the page template.

When the merchandising area is populated with scripting commands or listings, the contents of the merchandising area shows up on the sites that contain the related token. These contents show up wherever the token is positioned on that page. In one embodiment, merchandising area setup and population are performed in the control section of the administration module, by it would be possible to allow other administration users to access these functions.

Referring to Figs. 45 and 46, showcase areas get their start in the control panel. An auction server system employee first creates a showcase area that is associated with a specified category that is to be featured and/or merchandised. Once the category specific showcase area is created, the next step is to create both publishers (where the box will show up) and Subscribers (those customers that can add item-related content into the showcase area). Adding Subscribers is performed by clicking an "Add Subscriber" link and then selecting the

appropriate customers from the list that should be allowed to enter items into the box. The Final Step is to add Publishers or the site that the box will show up on. This is achieved in an almost identical process to adding subscribers. The user first selects a "Create Publishers" link and then selects the sites that he or she would like to have the showcase box and its featured items show up on.

For example, for a Computers / Desktops page, we would want listings from computer merchants to show up, but not other types of merchants. Site-specific boxes can also be created by specifying the publisher and subscriber to be the same or related entities. In such cases, no other manufacturers or resellers are able to list items in this box.

The present invention has now been described in connection with a number of specific embodiments thereof. However, numerous modifications which are contemplated as falling within the scope of the present invention should now be apparent to those skilled in the art. Therefore, it is intended that the scope of the present invention be limited only by the scope of the claims appended hereto. In addition, the order of presentation of the claims should not be construed to limit the scope of any particular term in the claims.

What is claimed is:

What is claimed is:

1. A sales method for operation through a communications network, comprising:

presenting a first plurality of items for sale at a first sales interface at a first network address,

presenting the first plurality of items for sale at a second sales interface at a second network address,

receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the first sales interface,

receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the second sales interface,

awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the first sales interface, and

awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the second sales interface.

2. The method of claim 1 further including the step of directing some of the offerors to the first sales interface through a first internet web site and some of the offerors to the second sales interface through a second internet web site.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the network address of the first web site and the network address of the first sales interface share a first domain name portion and wherein the network address of the second web site and the network address of the second sales interface share a second domain name portion.

4. The method of claim 4 wherein the first domain name portion includes the domain name of the first internet web site and wherein the second domain name portion includes the domain name of the second internet web site.

5. The method of claim 3 wherein the network address of the first web site is mapped to a first sever, wherein the network address of the second web site is mapped to a second server, and wherein the network address of the first sales interface and the network address of the second sales interface are mapped to a third server.

6. The method of claim 5 further including the step of exchanging user information between the first and second web sites for a fee, and wherein the fee is accounted for electronically by the third server.

7. The method of claim 2 wherein the first and second web sites belong to different legal entities.

8. The method of claim 2 wherein the first web site further provides at least a first additional service, other than sales, and wherein the second web site further provides at least a second additional service, other than sales and different from the first additional service.

9. The method of claim 2 further including the step of exchanging user information between the first and second web sites for a fee.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the further information includes user e-mail addresses.

11. The method of claim 2 further including the step of posting advertisements provided to the first site on the second site.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of presenting the first plurality of items at a first sales interface and the step of presenting the first plurality of items at a second sales interface present two different user interfaces.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of presenting the first plurality of items for sale at a first sales interface and the step of presenting the first plurality of items at a second sales interface are performed by a same server.

14. The method of claim 1 further including the steps of presenting a third plurality of items for sale at the first sales interface and refraining from presenting the same third plurality of the items for sale at the second sales interface.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein the steps of presenting a first plurality of items for sale present the first plurality of items for auction, and wherein the steps of receiving offers from offerors receive bids from bidders.

16. The method of claim 1 wherein the steps of presenting a first plurality of items for sale present the first plurality of items for a variable price sale.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein the steps of presenting a first plurality of items for sale present the first plurality of items in the form of classified listings.

18. The method of claim 1 further including the step of selectively blocking display of items received at a third sales interface from being displayed at the first sales interface.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of blocking is performed by a party receiving the listings.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of blocking is performed by a party presenting the listings for sale.

21. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of blocking is performed for predetermined categories of items.

22. The method of claim 1 further including the step of charging commissions according to both which party receives the listings and which party sells the items.

23. The method of claim 1 further including the step of receiving listings for a first subset of the first plurality of items at the first sales interface, and receiving listings for a second subset of the first plurality of items at a second sales interface at the second sales interface.

24. A sales system for coupling to a communications network, comprising:

a first sales interface at a first network address, the first sales interface including a first offer interface,

a second sales interface at a second network address, the second sales interface including a second offer interface, and

wherein a common database system is responsive to offers from both the first and second offer interfaces.

25. The system of claim 21 wherein the address of the first sales interface address shares a domain name portion with an address of a first web site and wherein the address of the second sales interface shares a domain name portion with an address of a second web site.

26. The system of claim 25 wherein the domain name portion shared by the address of the first sales interface and the address of the first web site includes the domain name of the first web site, and wherein the domain name portion shared by the address of the second sales interface and the address of the second web site includes the domain name of the second web site.

27. The system of claim 25 wherein the network address of the first web site is mapped to a first sever, wherein the network address of the second web site is mapped to a second server, and wherein the network address of the first sales interface and the network address of the second sales interface are mapped to a third server, which server is operatively connected to the database system.

28. The system of claim 27 further including a transfer module operative to exchange user information between the first and second web sites for a fee and wherein the third server further includes an accounting module operative to account for the fee.

29. The system of claim 24 wherein the first sales interface and the second sales interface present different user interfaces.

30. The system of claim 29 further including a user customization module responsive to user input to customize user interface features of the first sales interface and the second sales interface.

31. The system of claim 30 wherein the user customization interface is remotely accessible.

32. The system of claim 30 wherein the user customization interface is accessible using a web browser.

33. The system of claim 30 further including a transfer module operative to exchange user information between the first and second web sites for a fee.

34. The system of claim 30 further including a cross-site advertising module operative to post advertisements provided to the first site on the second site.

35. The system of claim 24 further including a listing category selection interface that is operative to cause a second plurality of items to be presented for sale at the first sales interface and to prevent the same second plurality of the items to be presented at the second sales interface.

36. The system of claim 24 wherein the first sales interface is a first auction interface and wherein the second sales interface is a second auction interface.

37. The system of claim 24 wherein the first sales interface is a first variable price sale interface and wherein the second sales interface is a second variable price sale interface.

38. The system of claim 24 wherein the first sales interface is a first classified interface and wherein the second sales interface is a second classified interface.

39. The system of claim 24 further including a filter for selectively blocking display of items received at a third sales interface from being displayed at the first sales interface.

40. The system of claim 39 wherein the filter is responsive to input from a party receiving the listings.

41. The system of claim 39 wherein the filter is responsive to input from a party presenting the listings for sale.

42. The system of claim 39 wherein the filter is responsive to a list of categories.

43. The system of claim 24 wherein the first sales interface further includes a first listing interface and wherein the second sales interface further includes a second listing interface.

44. The system of claim 43 further including a commissions module responsive to both the offer and listing interfaces.

45. A sales system for coupling to a communications network, comprising:

a listing interface responsive to user input to list items for sale through a plurality of sales interfaces, and

an offering interface responsive to user input at different ones of the plurality of sales interfaces to make offers for items listed through the different ones of the plurality of sales interfaces.

46. The system of claim 44 wherein the plurality of sales interfaces are located at different network addresses.

47. The system of claim 44 wherein the listing interface is an auction listing interface and wherein the offering interface is a bidding interface.

48. The system of claim 44 wherein the listing interface and the offering interface are variable price sale interfaces.

49. The system of claim 44 wherein the listing interface is a classified listing interface and wherein the offering interface is a classified response interface.

50. A sales method for operation through a communications network, comprising:

receiving listings from an interface for items for sale through a plurality of sales interfaces, and

receiving offers from an interface for items listed through different ones of the plurality of sales interfaces.

51. The method of claim 50 wherein the plurality of sales interfaces are located at different network addresses.

52. The method of claim 50 wherein the listing interface is an auction listing interface and wherein the offering interface is a bidding interface.

53. The method of claim 50 wherein the listing interface and the offering interface are variable price sale interfaces.

54. The method of claim 50 wherein the listing interface is a classified listing interface and wherein the offering interface is a classified response interface.

55. A sales method for operation through a communications network, comprising:

presenting a first plurality of items for sale at a first sales interface by a first legal entity,

presenting the first plurality of items for sale at a second sales interface at a second legal entity,

receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the first sales interface,

receiving offers for at least some of the items in the first plurality from offerors through the second sales interface,

awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the first sales interface, and

awarding some of the items in the first plurality to offerors having placed offers through the second sales interface.

56. The method of claim 55 further including the step of directing some of the offerors to the first networked sales interface through a first internet web site and some of the offerors to the second networked sales interface through a second internet web site.

57. The method of claim 56 wherein the first web site further provides at least a first additional service, other than sales, and wherein the second web site further provides at least a second additional service, other than sales and different from the first additional service.

58. The method of claim 56 further including the step of exchanging user information between the first and second web sites for a fee.

59. The method of claim 56 further including the step of posting advertisements provided to the first site on the second site.

60. The method of claim 55 wherein the step of presenting the first plurality of items at a first networked sales interface and the step of presenting the first plurality of items at a second networked sales interface present two differently branded user interfaces.

61. The method of claim 55 wherein the steps of presenting a first plurality of items for sale present the first plurality of items for auction, and wherein the steps of receiving offers from offerors receive bids from bidders.

62. The method of claim 55 wherein the steps of presenting a first plurality of items for sale present the first plurality of items for a variable price sale.

63. The method of claim 55 wherein the steps of presenting a first plurality of items for sale present the first plurality of items in the form of classified listings.

64. The method of claim 55 further including the step of selectively blocking display of items received at a third sales interface from being displayed at the first sales interface.

65. The method of claim 64 wherein the step of blocking is performed by the entity receiving the listings.

66. The method of claim 64 wherein the step of blocking is performed by the entity presenting the listings for sale.

67. The method of claim 64 wherein the step of blocking is performed for predetermined categories of items.

68. The method of claim 55 further including the step of charging commissions according to both which entity receives the listings and which entity sells the items.

69. The method of claim 55 further including the step of receiving listings for a first subset of the first plurality of items at the first sales interface, and receiving listings for a second subset of the first plurality of items at a second sales interface at the second sales interface.

70. A sales system for coupling to a communications network, comprising:

a first sales interface at a first network address, the first sales interface including a first set of categorization interface elements for categories of items,

a second sales interface at a second network address, the second sales interface including a second set of categorization interface elements for categories of items, and

wherein a common database system is operative to store items for both sales interfaces.

71. The system of claim 70 further including a categorization interface responsive to user input to define the first and second sets of categorized interface elements.

72. The system of claim 71 wherein the categorization interface is responsive to user input to select categorization interface elements from a base categorization set.

73. The system of claim 72 wherein the categorization interface is responsive to user input to add custom categorization elements in addition to those in the base categorization set to at least one of the first and second sets of categorization interface elements.

74. The system of claim 72 wherein the categorization interface is responsive to user input to map categorization interface elements in at least one of the sets to categorization interface elements selected from the base categorization set.

75. The system of claim 74 wherein the system is operative to cross-list items between the first and second interfaces if those items are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements that are both mapped to a same categorization interface element selected from the base categorization set.

76. The system of claim 72 wherein the system is operative to cross-list items between the first and second interfaces if they are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements of the same type from the base categorization set.

77. The system of claim 71 wherein the categorization interface elements include collapsible categorization interface element trees.

78. The system of claim 71 wherein the system is responsive to user input to selectively refrain from cross-listing items between sites.

79. The system of claim 71 wherein the system is responsive to user input to prevent listings placed at the first sales interface from being exported to the second sales interface.

80. The system of claim 71 wherein the system is responsive to user input to prevent listings placed at the first sales interface from being imported to the second sales interface.

81. The system of claim 71 wherein the address of the first sales interface address shares a domain name portion with an address of a first web site and wherein the address of the second sales interface shares a domain name portion with an address of a second web site.

82. The system of claim 81 wherein the domain name portion shared by the address of the first sales interface and the address of the first web site includes the domain name of the first web site, and wherein the domain name portion shared by the address of the second sales interface and the address of the second web site includes the domain name of the second web site.

83. The system of claim 81 wherein the network address of the first web site is mapped to a first sever, wherein the network address of the second web site is mapped to a second server, and wherein the network address of the first sales interface and the network address of the second sales interface are mapped to a third server, and wherein the third server provides the categorization interface to the first and second web sites through a network port.

84. The system of claim 71 wherein the categorization interface elements each include different specification elements.

85. The system of claim 71 wherein the categorization interface elements each include an unused attribute.

86. A sales method comprising:

storing a central database of sales items,

listing a first plurality of the items categorized by a first set of set of categorization interface elements at a first sales interface, and

listing a second plurality of the items categorized by a second set of set of categorization interface elements at a second sales interface.

87. The method of claim 86 further including the steps of defining the first set of categorization interface elements and the second set of categorization interface elements through a common categorization interface.

88. The method of claim 87 wherein the steps of defining include selecting categorization interface elements from a base categorization set.

89. The method of claim 88 wherein the steps of defining include adding custom categorization elements in addition to those in the base categorization set to at least one of the first and second sets of categorized interface elements in response to user input.

90. The method of claim 88 further including mapping categorization interface elements in at least one of the sets to categorization interface elements selected from the base categorization set.

91. The method of claim 90 further including the step of cross-listing items between the first and second interfaces if those items are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements that are both mapped to a same categorization interface element selected from the base categorization set.

92. The method of claim 88 further including the step of cross-listing items between the first and second interfaces if they are listed at one of the first and second interfaces using categorization interface elements of the same type from the base categorization set.

93. The method of claim 87 wherein the categorization interface elements include collapsible categorization interface element trees.

94. The method of claim 87 further including the step of selectively refraining from cross-listing items between sites.

95. The method of claim 87 wherein the categorization interface elements each include different specification elements.

96. The method of claim 87 wherein the categorization interface elements each include an unused attribute.

97. A sales system for coupling to a communications network, comprising:

a first sales interface at a first network address, the first sales interface including a first set of user interface elements,

a second sales interface at a second network address, the second sales interface including a second set of user interface elements, and

a customization interface responsive to user input to define the first and second sets of user interface elements.

98. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface includes a series of templates that each define display attributes of one or more views for the first and second sales interfaces.

99. The system of claim 98 wherein the customization interface is responsive to user arrangement of a plurality of user interface tokens within the templates to define display attributes of one or more views for the first sales interface.

100. The system of claim 97 wherein the templates are constructed and adapted to receive scripting commands.

101. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface is responsive to user arrangement of a plurality of user interface tokens to define display attributes for one or more views of the first sales interface.

102. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface is operative to define a set of transaction types for the system.

103. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface is operative to define a set of transaction attributes for the system.

104. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface is operative to provide different branding elements for the first sales interface and for the second sales interface.

105. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface includes a plurality of e-mail templates that each define display attributes of e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces.

106. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface includes an e-mail sender address selection interface operative to define a sender address for e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces.

107. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface is remotely accessible.

108. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface is accessible using a web browser.

109. The system of claim 97 wherein the customization interface is a categorization interface responsive to user input to define the first and second sets of categorized interface elements.

110. The system of claim 109 wherein the categorization interface is responsive to user input to select categorization interface elements from a base categorization set.

111. The system of claim 110 wherein the categorization interface is responsive to user input to add custom categorization elements in addition to those in the base categorization set to at least one of the first and second sets of categorization interface elements.

112. The system of claim 110 wherein the categorization interface is responsive to user input to map categorization interface elements in at least one of the sets to categorization interface elements selected from the base categorization set.

113. The system of claim 109 wherein the categorization interface elements include collapsible categorization interface element trees.

114. The system of claim 109 wherein the categorization interface elements each include different specification elements.

115. The system of claim 109 wherein the categorization interface elements each include an unused attribute.

116. A sales method for operation through a communications network, comprising:

receiving customization commands from a first accountholder,

receiving customization commands from a second accountholder,

presenting a first sales interface through the network for the first accountholder based on the item categorization input received from the first accountholder, and

presenting a second networked sales interface through the network for the second accountholder based on the item categorization input received from the second accountholder.

117. The method of claim 116 wherein the customization commands include customizations of templates that each define display attributes of one or more views for the first and second sales interfaces.

118. The method of claim 116 wherein the customization commands include a user arrangement of a plurality of user interface tokens to define display attributes for one or more views of the first sales interface.

119. The method of claim 116 wherein the customization commands include a set of transaction attribute commands.

120. The method of claim 116 wherein the steps of presenting present differently branded interfaces.

121. The method of claim 116 wherein the customization commands include a user arrangement of a plurality of e-mail templates that each define display attributes of e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces.

122. The method of claim 116 wherein the customization commands include an e-mail sender address selection to define a sender address for e-mail communications sent as part of a series of user interactions with one of the first and second sales interfaces.

123. A sales system for coupling to a communications network, comprising:

an item database,

a first sales interface operative to offer items from the database for sale through a communications network; and

a bulk upload interface associated with the first sales interface and operative to upload lists of items from a plurality of different users into the database.

124. The system of claim 123 wherein the bulk upload interface is operative to upload lists in a tabular delimited text format.

125. The system of claim 123 wherein the bulk upload interface is operative to upload lists that include items in different categories and having different types of specifications in those categories.

126. The system of claim 123 further including at least one further sales interface operative to offer items from the database for sale through the communications network and further including a second bulk upload interface associated with the second sales interface and operative to upload lists of items from a plurality of different users into the database.

127. The system of claim 126 wherein the first and second bulk upload interfaces are operative to upload lists that include items in different categories and having different types of specifications in those categories, and wherein the first and second sales interfaces are operative to list different subsets of the categories.

128. The system of claim 123 wherein the sales interface is an auction interface.

129. The system of claim 123 wherein the sales interface is a classifieds interface.

130. The system of claim 123 wherein the sales interface is a variable price sales interface.

131. The system of claim 123 wherein the sales interfaces are provided by different web sites on a public communications network.

132. A sales method for operation through a communications network, comprising:

receiving a first list of sales items in electronic form from a user at a first sales interface,

receiving a second list of sales items in electronic form from a user at a second sales interface,

storing the first and second lists,

presenting a first subset of the items in the first and second lists at the first sales interface, and

presenting a second subset of the items in the first and second lists at the second sales interface.

133. The method of claim 132 wherein lists are in a tabular delimited text format.

134. The method of claim 132 wherein lists include items in different categories and having different types of specifications in those categories.

135. The method of claim 132 wherein the sales interfaces are auction interfaces.

136. The system of claim 132 wherein the sales interfaces are provided by different web sites on a public communications network.

137. A sales system for coupling to a communications network, comprising:

a database including records for a plurality of sales items,

an extraction module operative to extract a structured model of at least part of the database,

a static module operative to periodically generate a series of sales interface elements based on the structured model, and to store them in a storage system,

a dynamic module operative to retrieve item information directly from the database in response to specific requests from the network, and

a server responsive to a network port to retrieve selected ones of the sales interface elements from the storage system in response to a first type of request received from the network and to retrieve the item information from the dynamic module in response to a second type of request received from the network.

138. The system of claim 137 wherein the extraction module is operative to extract the structured model as an object-oriented model.

139. The system of claim 137 wherein the extraction module is operative to extract different sales interface elements for different sales systems.

140. The system of claim 137 wherein the extraction module is operative to extract a plurality of hierarchical category models for different sales systems.

141. The system of claim 137 wherein the dynamic module is operative to retrieve listing detail views in response to the requests.

142. The system of claim 137 wherein the static module is operative to retrieve item category views.

143. The system of claim 137 wherein the static module is operative to generate sales interface elements that include scripting language files.

144. The system of claim 143 wherein the scripting language files are HTML files.

145. The system of claim 137 wherein the user interface elements include auction user interface elements.

146. A sales method for operation through a communications network, comprising:

a storing a database of sales items,

extracting a structured model of at least part of the database,

periodically generating a series of sales interface elements based on the structured model,

storing the sales interface elements,

retrieving item information directly from the database in response to a first type of request from the network, and

retrieving selected ones of the sales interface elements from storage in response to a second type of request received from the network.

147. The method of claim 146 wherein the step of extracting extracts the structured model as an object-oriented model.

148. The method of claim 146 wherein the step of extracting extracts different sales interface elements for different sales systems.

149. The method of claim 146 wherein the step of extracting extracts a plurality of hierarchical category models for different sales systems.

150. The method of claim 146 wherein the step of retrieving sales information retrieves listing detail views in response to the requests.

151. The method of claim 146 wherein the step of generating generates item category views.

152. The method of claim 146 wherein the step of generating generates scripting language files.

153. The method of claim 152 wherein the scripting language files are HTML files.

154. The method of claim 146 wherein the user interface elements include auction user interface elements.

155. The method of claim 146 wherein the user interface elements include classifieds user interface elements.

156. The method of claim 146 wherein the user interface elements include variable price sale user interface elements.

157. A sales system for coupling to a communications network, comprising:

a database including records for a plurality of sales items, and

a dynamic retrieval module, comprising:

a database fragment retrieval module responsive to the database to retrieve information for a sales information fragment, and

a customization module operative to customize the fragment for a particular user interface in response to a user request for the fragment from that interface.

158. The system of claim 157 further including a storage area for storing the fragment between user access requests.

159. The system of claim 158 wherein the storage area is on a file server.

160. The system of claim 158 wherein the dynamic retrieval module further includes an update detection module operative to detect when information for a sales information fragment has changed.

161. The system of claim 157 wherein the database fragment is for an item lot detail page for an auction system.

162. The system of claim 157 wherein the database fragment is for an item lot detail page for a classified system.

163. The system of claim 157 wherein the database fragment is for an item lot detail page for a variable price sales system.

164. A sales method for operation through a communications network, comprising:

retrieving information for a sales information fragment from a database, and

customizing the fragment for different user interfaces after the step of retrieving, in response to user requests for the fragment from the different user interfaces.

165. The method of claim 164 further including the step of storing the fragment between user access requests.

166. The method of claim 164 wherein the step of storing stores the fragment on a file server.

167. The method of claim 164 further including the step of detecting when information for the sales information fragment has changed.

168. The method of claim 164 wherein the database fragment is for an item lot detail page for an auction system.

169. The method of claim 164 wherein the database fragment is for an item lot detail page for a classified system.

170. The method of claim 164 wherein the database fragment is for an item lot detail page for a variable price sales system.

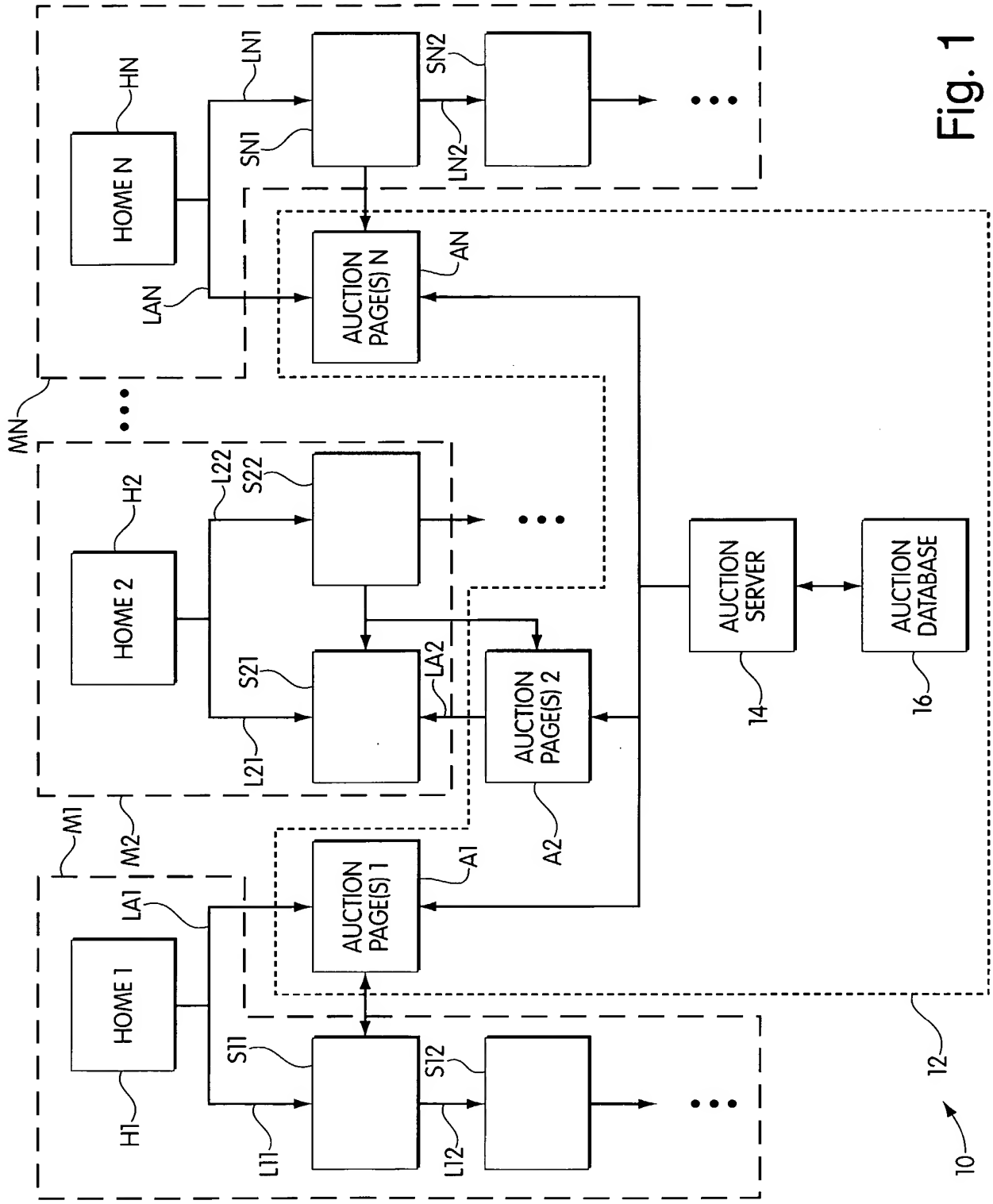
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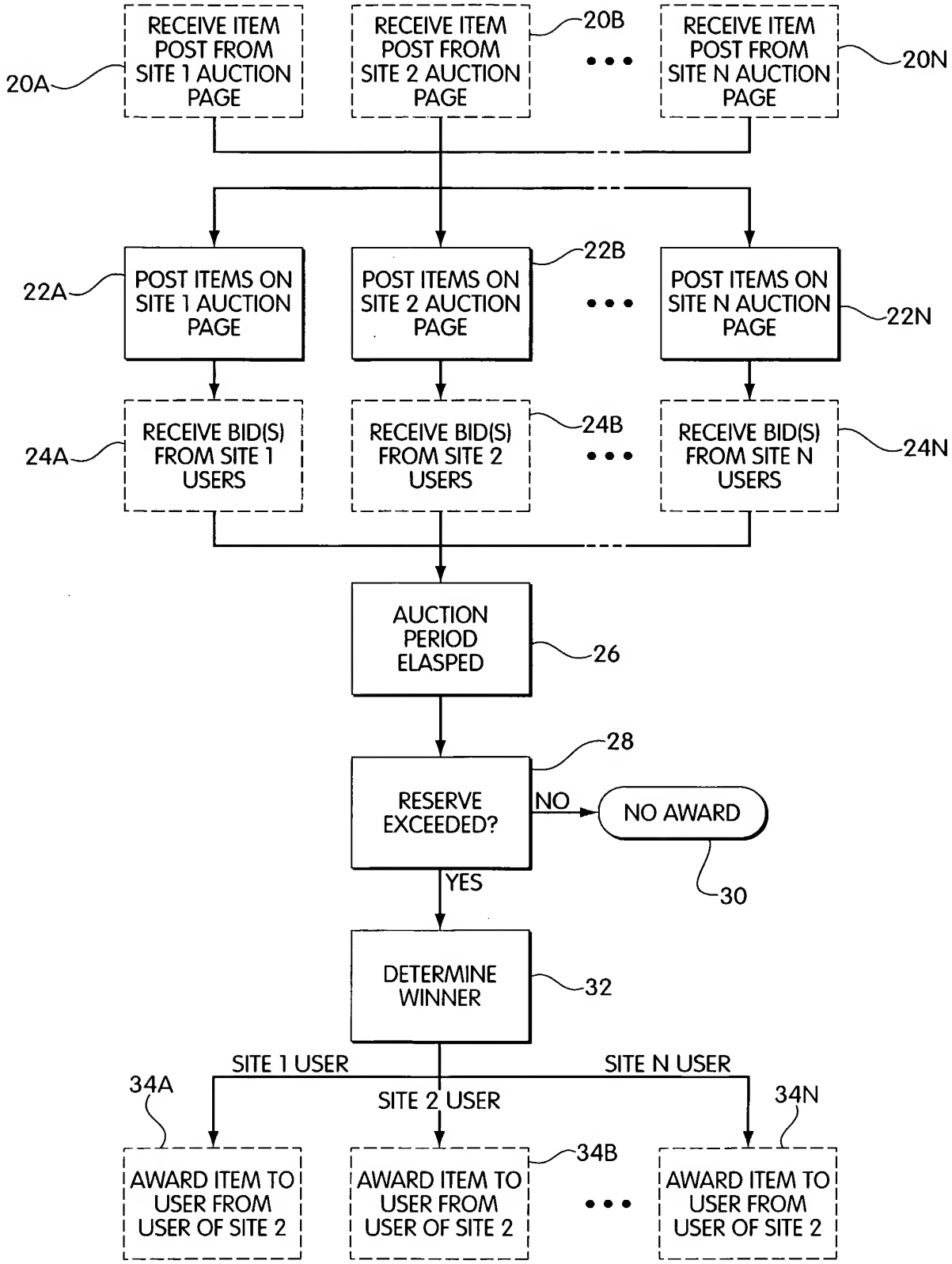
Fig. 1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POST ITEMS ON SITE 2 AUCTION PAGE
22B
POST ITEMS ON SITE N AUCTION PAGE
22N
RECEIVE BID(S) FROM SITE 1 USERS
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24B
RECEIVE BID(S) FROM SITE N USERS
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AUCTION PERIOD ELASPED
26
RESERVE EXCEEDED?
28
NO
NO AWARD
30
YES
DETERMINE WINNER
32
SITE 1 USER
SITE 2 USER
SITE N USER
34A
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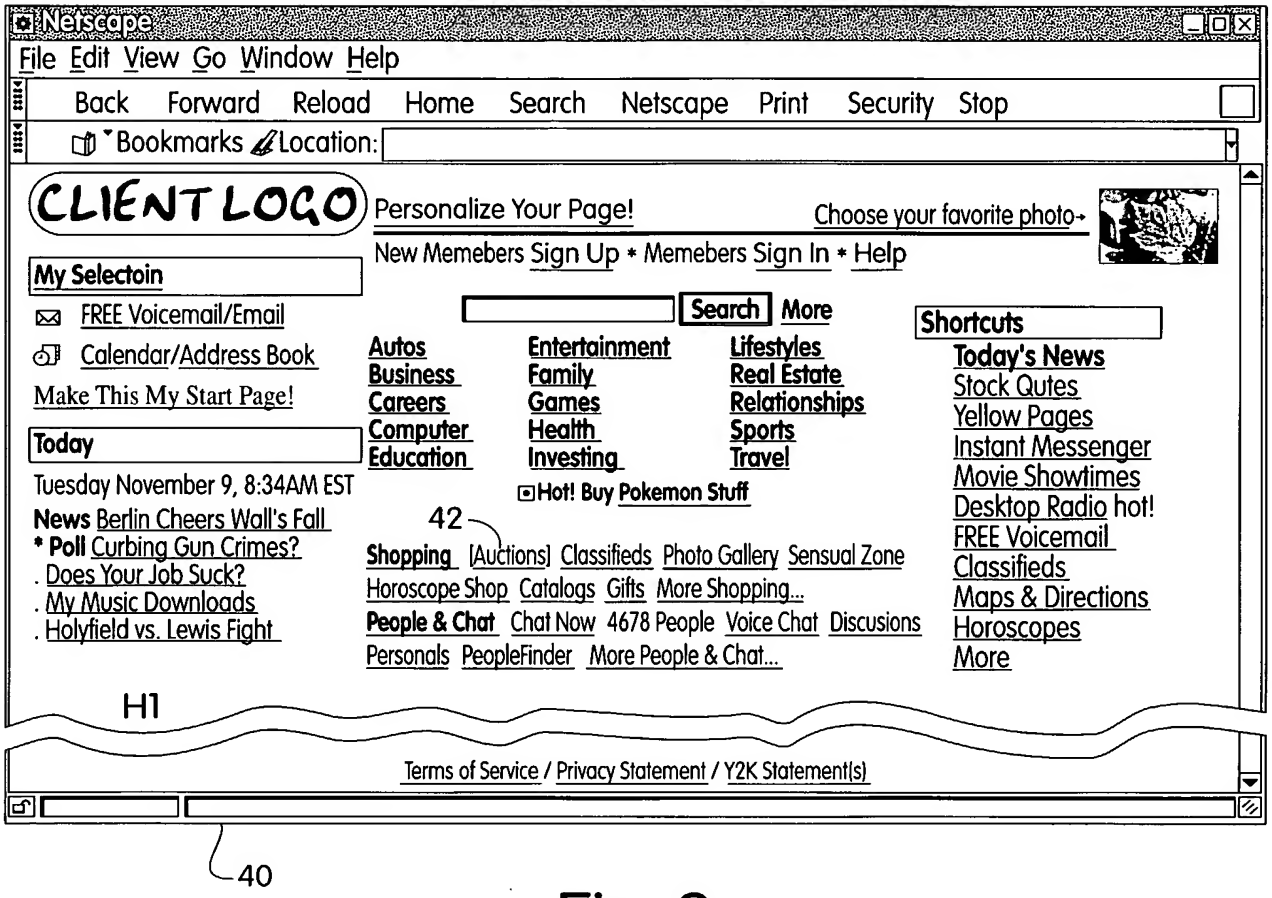
Fig. 2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Choose your favorite photo
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My Selectoin
FREE Voicemail/Email
Calendar/Address Book
Make This My Start Page!
Today
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. Does Your Job Suck?
. My Music Downloads
. Holyfield vs. Lewis Fight
Search More
Autos Entertainment Lifestyles
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Education Investing Travel
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Today's News
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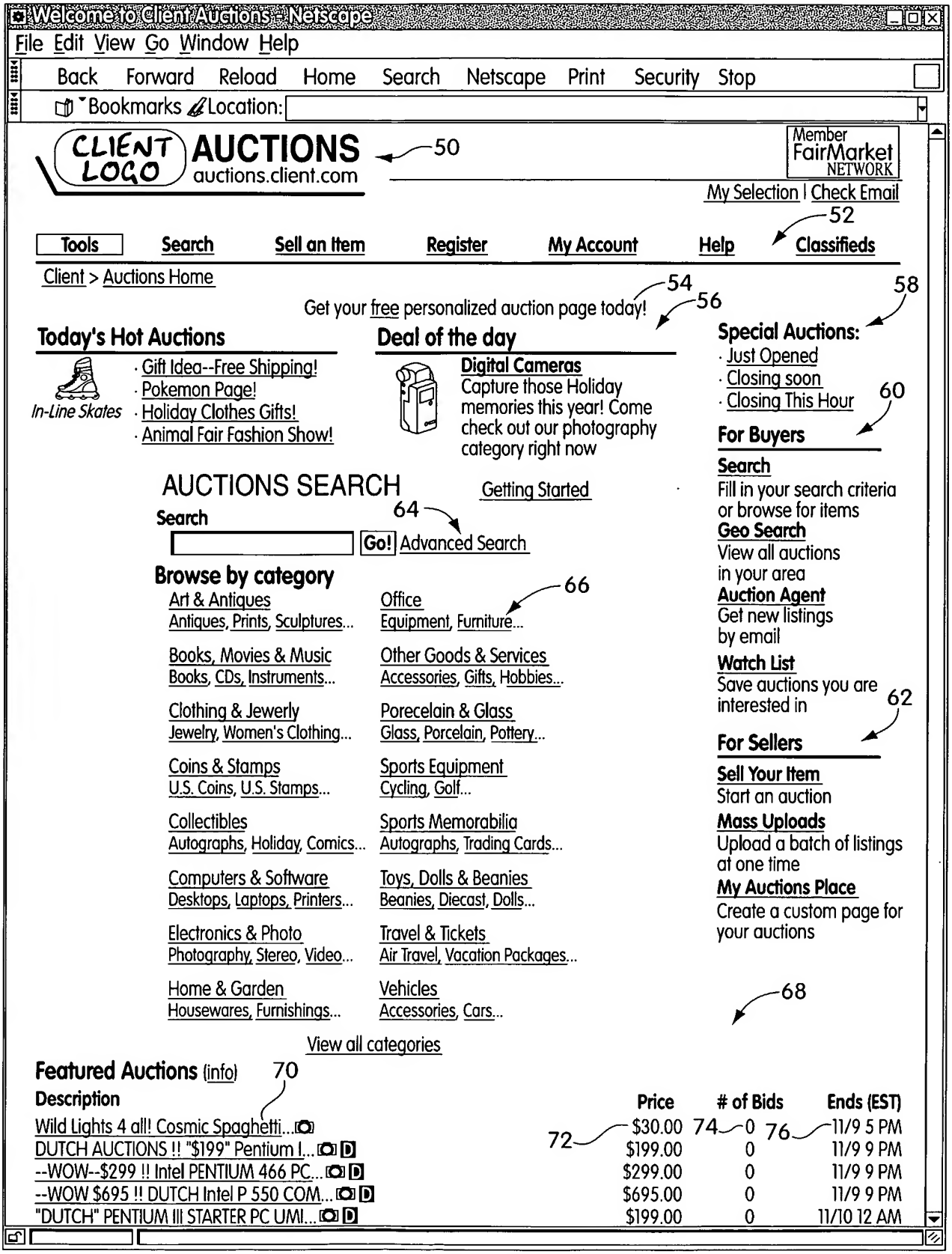
40

Fig. 3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Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
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Member FairMarket NETWORK
My Selection | Check Email
52
Tools Search Sell an Item Register My Account Help Classifieds
Client > Auctions Home
54
56
58
Get your free personalized auction page today!
Today's Hot Auctions
In-Line Skates
· Gift Idea--Free Shipping!
· Pokemon Page!
· Holiday Clothes Gifts!
· Animal Fair Fashion Show!
Deal of the day
Digital Cameras
Capture those Holiday memories this year! Come check out our photography category right now
Special Auctions:
· Just Opened
· Closing soon
· Closing This Hour
60
For Buyers
Search
Fill in your search criteria or browse for items
Geo Search
View all auctions in your area
Auction Agent
Get new listings by email
Watch List
Save auctions you are interested in
62
For Sellers
Sell Your Item
Start an auction
Mass Uploads
Upload a batch of listings at one time
My Auctions Place
Create a custom page for your auctions
AUCTIONS SEARCH
Getting Started
Search
64
Go! Advanced Search
Browse by category
66
Art & Antiques
Antiques, Prints, Sculptures...
Office
Equipment, Furniture...
Books, Movies & Music
Books, CDs, Instruments...
Other Goods & Services
Accessories, Gifts, Hobbies...
Clothing & Jewerly
Jewelry, Women's Clothing...
Porecelain & Glass
Glass, Porcelain, Pottery...
Coins & Stamps
U.S. Coins, U.S. Stamps...
Sports Equipment
Cycling, Golf...
Collectibles
Autographs, Holiday, Comics...
Sports Memorabilia
Autographs, Trading Cards...
Computers & Software
Desktops, Laptops, Printers...
Toys, Dolls & Beanies
Beanies, Diecast, Dolls...
Electronics & Photo
Photography, Stereo, Video...
Travel & Tickets
Air Travel, Vacation Packages...
Home & Garden
Housewares, Furnishings...
Vehicles
Accessories, Cars...
68
View all categories
Featured Auctions (info)
70
Description
Price
# of Bids
Ends (EST)
Wild Lights 4 all! Cosmic Spaghetti... $30.00 0 11/9 5 PM
DUTCH AUCTIONS !! "$199" Pentium I... $199.00 0 11/9 9 PM
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--WOW $695 !! DUTCH Intel P 550 COM... $695.00 0 11/9 9 PM
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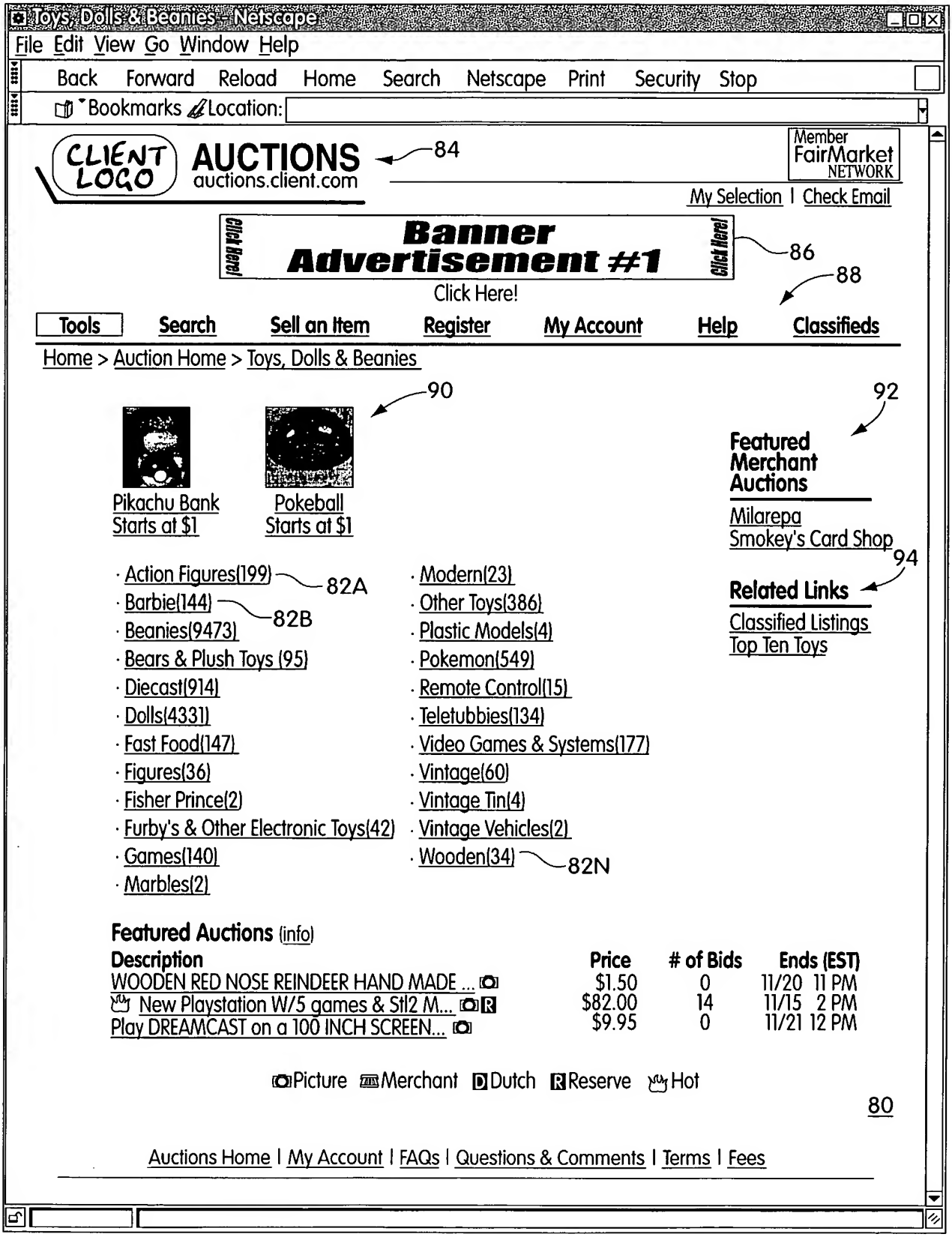
72
74
76

Fig. 4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· Barbie(144)
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· Bears & Plush Toys (95)
· Diecast(914)
· Dolls(4331)
· Fast Food(147)
· Figures(36)
· Fisher Prince(2)
· Furby's & Other Electronic Toys(42)
· Games(140)
· Marbles(2)
· Modern(23)
· Other Toys(386)
· Plastic Models(4)
· Pokemon(549)
· Remote Control(15)
· Teletubbies(134)
· Video Games & Systems(177)
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Play DREAMCAST on a 100 INCH SCREEN... $9.95 0 11/21 12 PM
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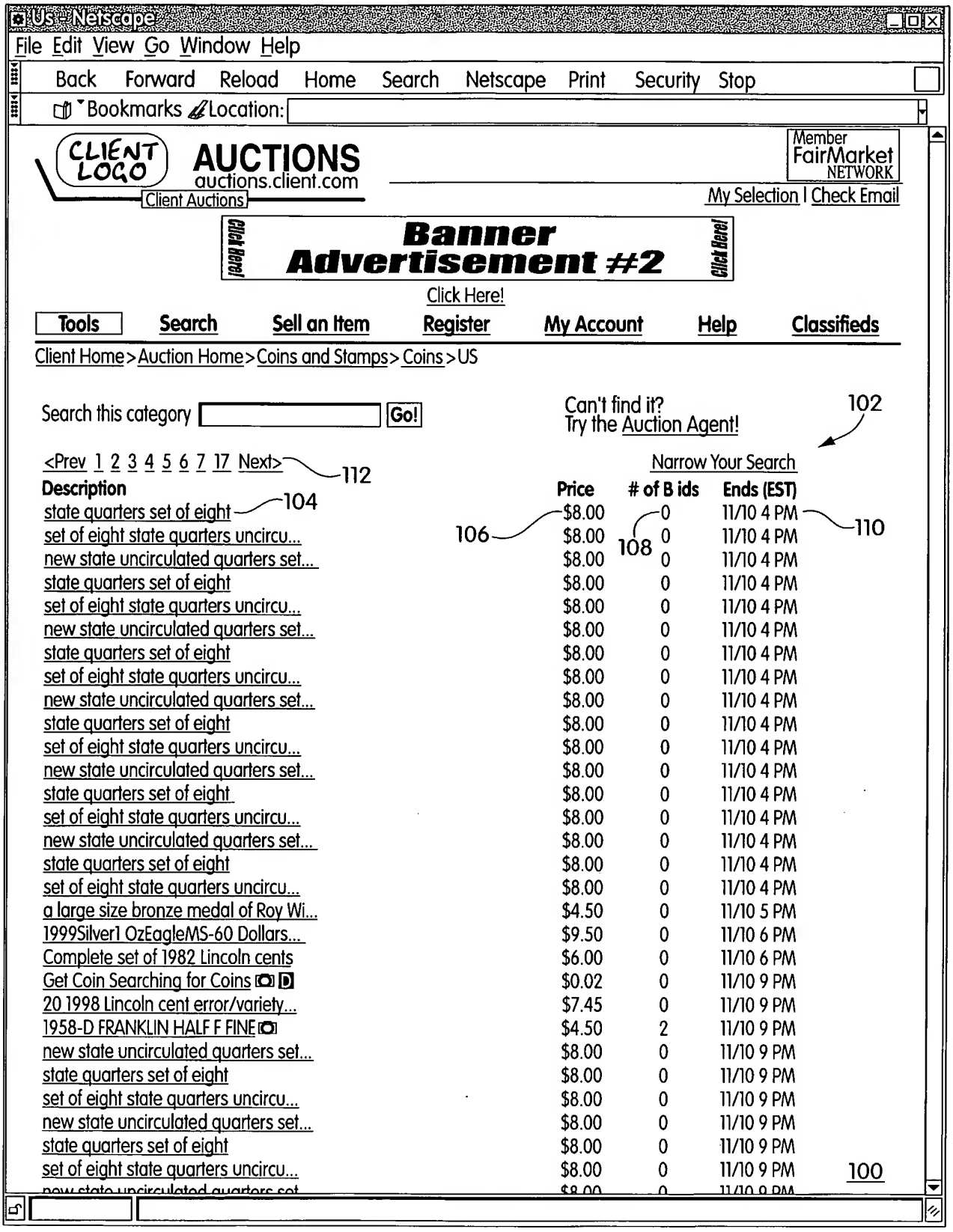
Fig. 5


US - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
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Banner Advertisement #2
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Tools Search Sell an Item Register My Account Help Classifieds
Client Home>Auction Home>Coins and Stamps>Coins>US
Search this category Go!
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102
<Prev 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 17 Next>
112
Narrow Your Search
Description
Price
# of B ids
Ends (EST)
104
106
108
110
100
state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
set of eight state quarters uncircu... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
new state uncirculated quarters set... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
set of eight state quarters uncircu... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
new state uncirculated quarters set... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
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state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
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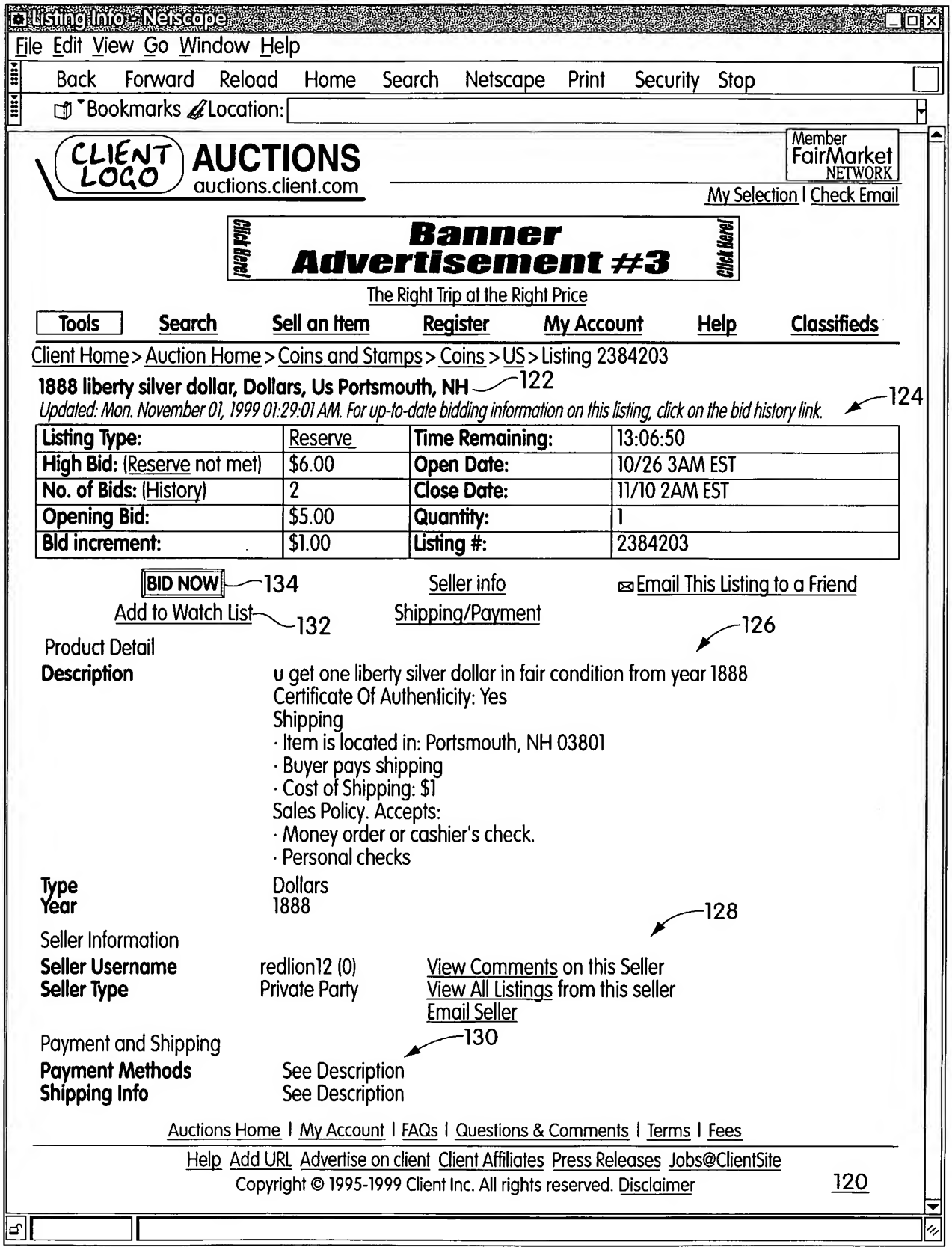
new state uncirculated quarters set... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
set of eight state quarters uncircu... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
new state uncirculated quarters set... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
set of eight state quarters uncircu... $8.00 0 11/10 4 PM
a large size bronze medal of Roy Wi... $4.50 0 11/10 5 PM
1999Silver1 OzEagleMS-60 Dollars... $9.50 0 11/10 6 PM
Complete set of 1982 Lincoln cents $6.00 0 11/10 6 PM
Get Coin Searching for Coins $0.02 0 11/10 9 PM
20 1998 Lincoln cent error/variety... $7.45 0 11/10 9 PM
1958-D FRANKLIN HALF F FINE $4.50 2 11/10 9 PM
new state uncirculated quarters set... $8.00 0 11/10 9 PM
state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 9 PM
set of eight state quarters uncircu... $8.00 0 11/10 9 PM
new state uncirculated quarters set... $8.00 0 11/10 9 PM
state quarters set of eight $8.00 0 11/10 9 PM
set of eight state quarters uncircu... $8.00 0 11/10 9 PM

Fig. 6


Listing Info - Netscape
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The Right Trip at the Right Price
Tools
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My Account
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Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > Coins and Stamps > Coins > US > Listing 2384203
1888 liberty silver dollar, Dollars, Us Portsmouth, NH
122
Updated: Mon. November 01, 1999 01:29:01 AM. For up-to-date bidding information on this listing, click on the bid history link.
124
Listing Type: Reserve
Time Remaining: 13:06:50
High Bid: (Reserve not met) $6.00
Open Date: 10/26 3AM EST
No. of Bids: (History) 2
Close Date: 11/10 2AM EST
Opening Bid: $5.00
Quantity: 1
Bid increment: $1.00
Listing #: 2384203
BID NOW
134
Add to Watch List
132
Seller info
Shipping/Payment
Email This Listing to a Friend
126
Product Detail
Description
u get one liberty silver dollar in fair condition from year 1888
Certificate Of Authenticity: Yes
Shipping
· Item is located in: Portsmouth, NH 03801
· Buyer pays shipping
· Cost of Shipping: $1
Sales Policy. Accepts:
· Money order or cashier's check.
· Personal checks
Type Dollars
Year 1888
128
Seller Information
Seller Username redlion12 (0)
Seller Type Private Party
View Comments on this Seller
View All Listings from this seller
Email Seller
Payment and Shipping
130
Payment Methods See Description
Shipping Info See Description
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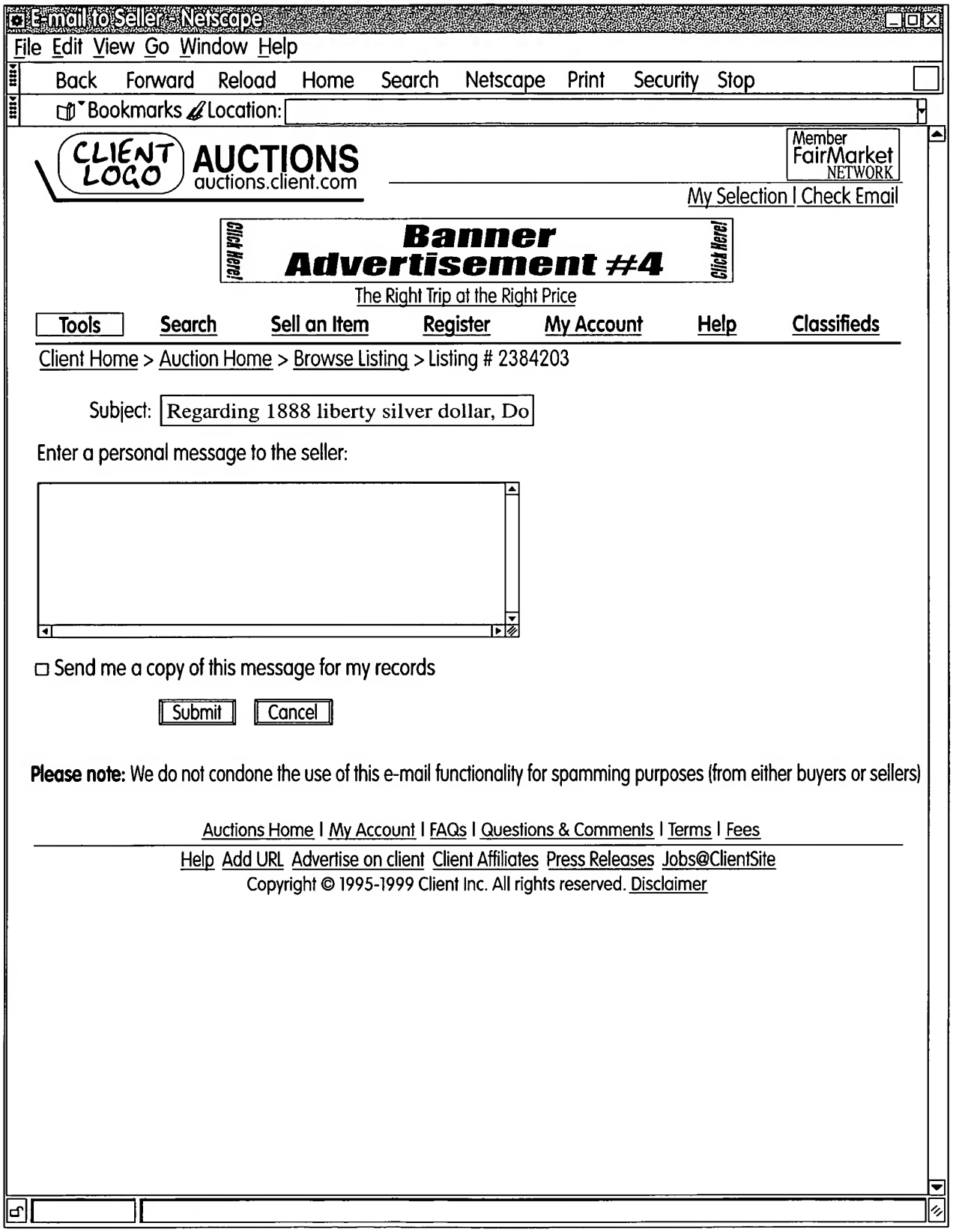
120

Fig. 7


E-mail to Seller - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
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AUCTIONS
auctions.client.com
Member FairMarket NETWORK
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Click Here!
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Click Here!
The Right Trip at the Right Price
Tools
Search
Sell an Item
Register
My Account
Help
Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > Browse Listing > Listing # 2384203
Subject: Regarding 1888 liberty silver dollar, Do
Enter a personal message to the seller:
Send me a copy of this message for my records
Submit
Cancel
Please note: We do not condone the use of this e-mail functionality for spamming purposes (from either buyers or sellers)
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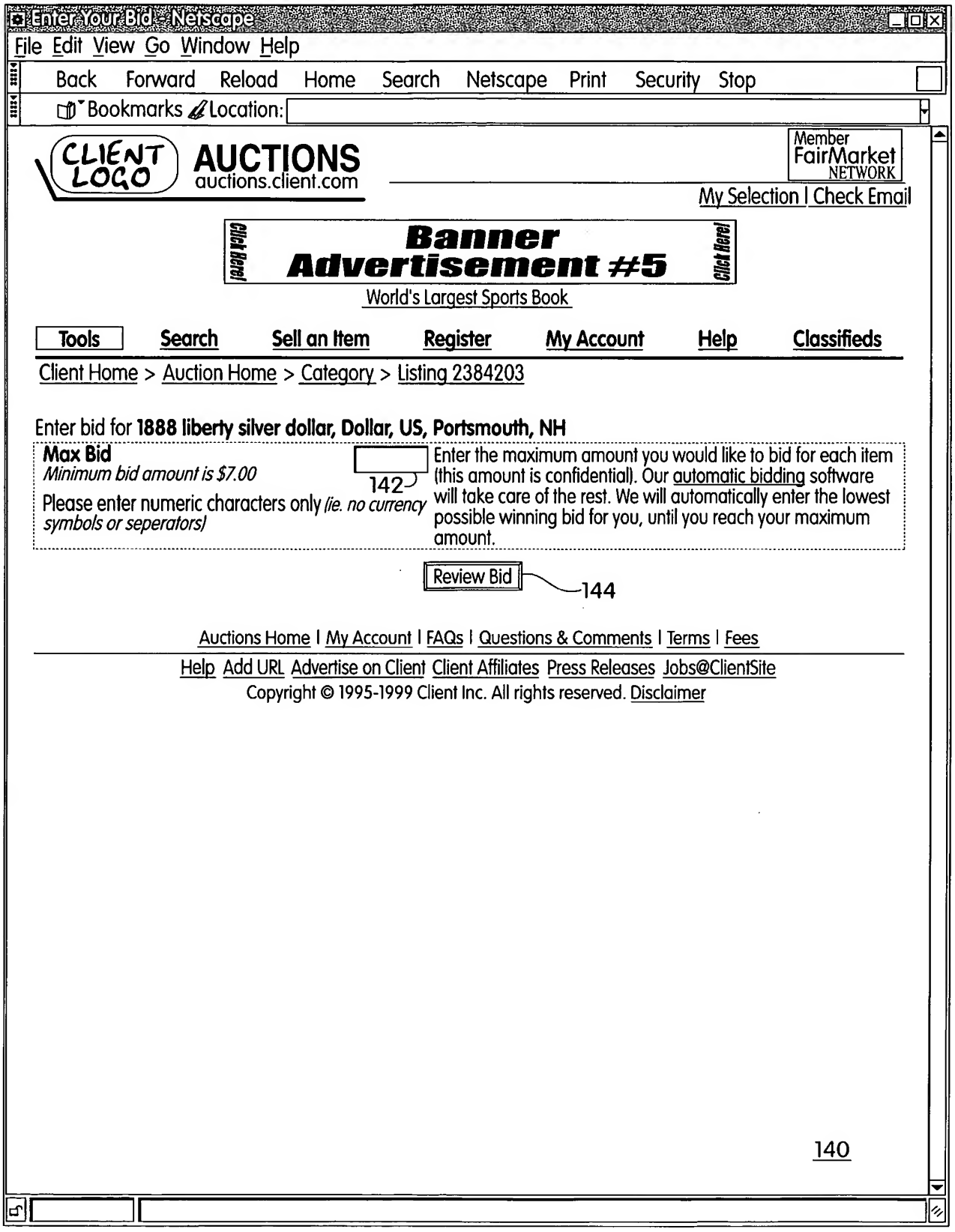
Fig. 8


Enter Your Bid - Netscape
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Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
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Banner Advertisement #5
Click Here!
World's Largest Sports Book
Tools
Search
Sell an Item
Register
My Account
Help
Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > Category > Listing 2384203
Enter bid for 1888 liberty silver dollar, Dollar, US, Portsmouth, NH
Max Bid
Minimum bid amount is $7.00
142
Please enter numeric characters only (ie. no currency symbols or seperators)
Enter the maximum amount you would like to bid for each item (this amount is confidential). Our automatic bidding software will take care of the rest. We will automatically enter the lowest possible winning bid for you, until you reach your maximum amount.
Review Bid
144
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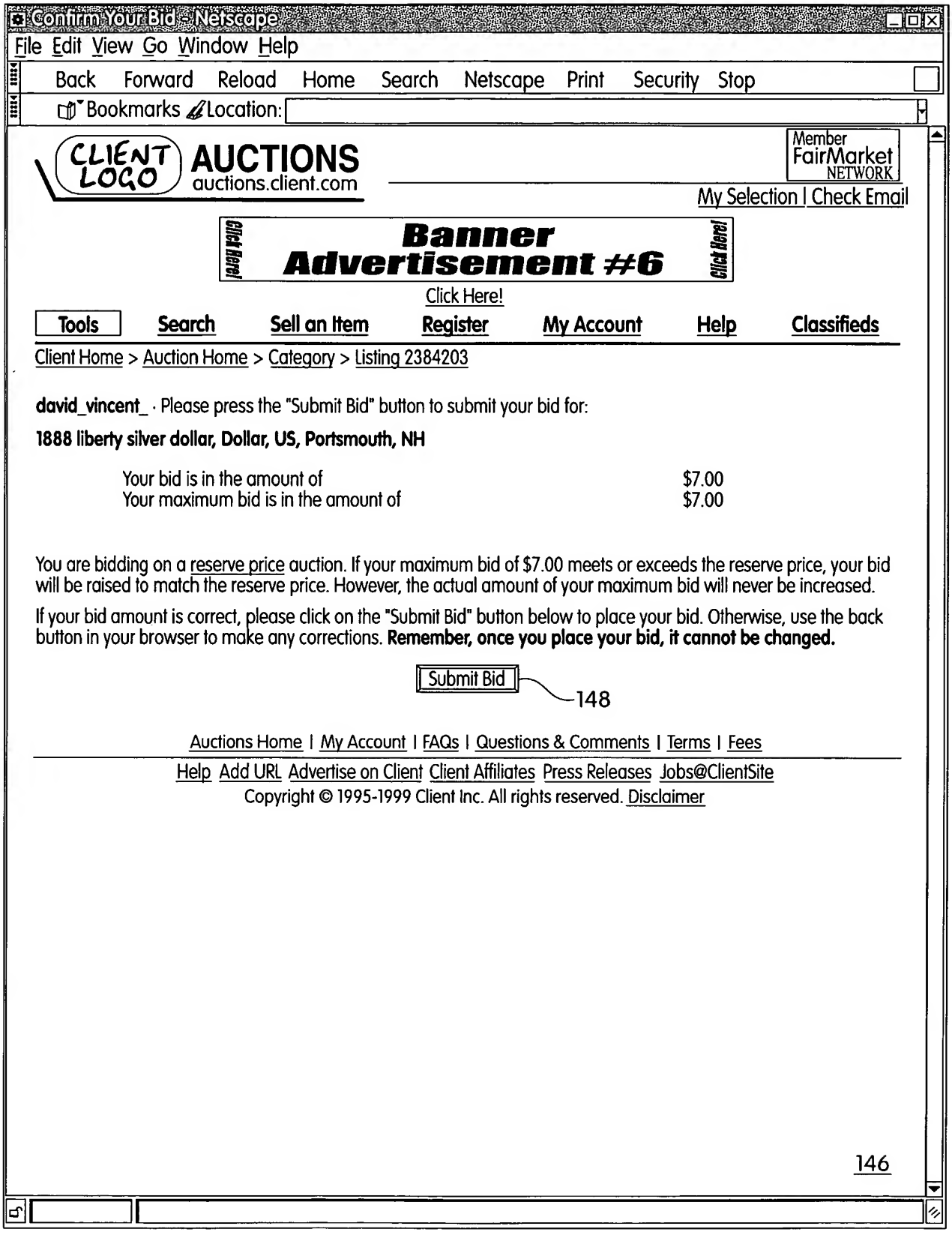
140

Fig. 9


Confirm Your Bid - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
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AUCTIONS
auctions.client.com
Member FairMarket NETWORK
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Banner Advertisement #6
Click Here!
Click Here!
Tools
Search
Sell an Item
Register
My Account
Help
Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > Category > Listing 2384203
david_vincent_ · Please press the "Submit Bid" button to submit your bid for:
1888 liberty silver dollar, Dollar, US, Portsmouth, NH
Your bid is in the amount of $7.00
Your maximum bid is in the amount of $7.00
You are bidding on a reserve price auction. If your maximum bid of $7.00 meets or exceeds the reserve price, your bid will be raised to match the reserve price. However, the actual amount of your maximum bid will never be increased.
If your bid amount is correct, please click on the "Submit Bid" button below to place your bid. Otherwise, use the back button in your browser to make any corrections. Remember, once you place your bid, it cannot be changed.
Submit Bid
148
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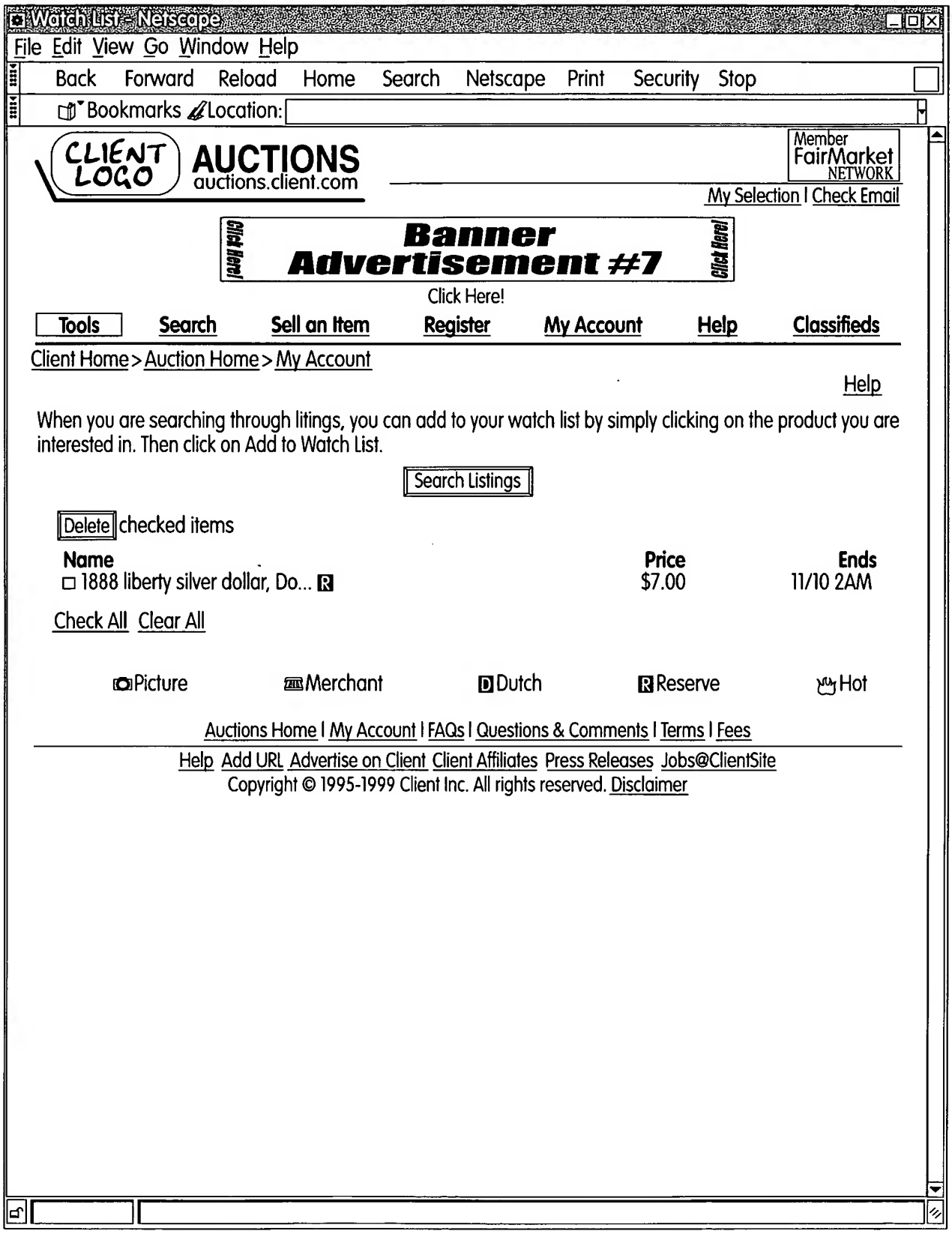
146

Fig. 10


Watch List - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
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Bookmarks Location:
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Client Home > Auction Home > My Account
Help
When you are searching through litings, you can add to your watch list by simply clicking on the product you are interested in. Then click on Add to Watch List.
Search Listings
Delete checked items
Name
Price
Ends
1888 liberty silver dollar, Do... R
$7.00
11/10 2AM
Check All Clear All
Picture
Merchant
D Dutch
R Reserve
Hot
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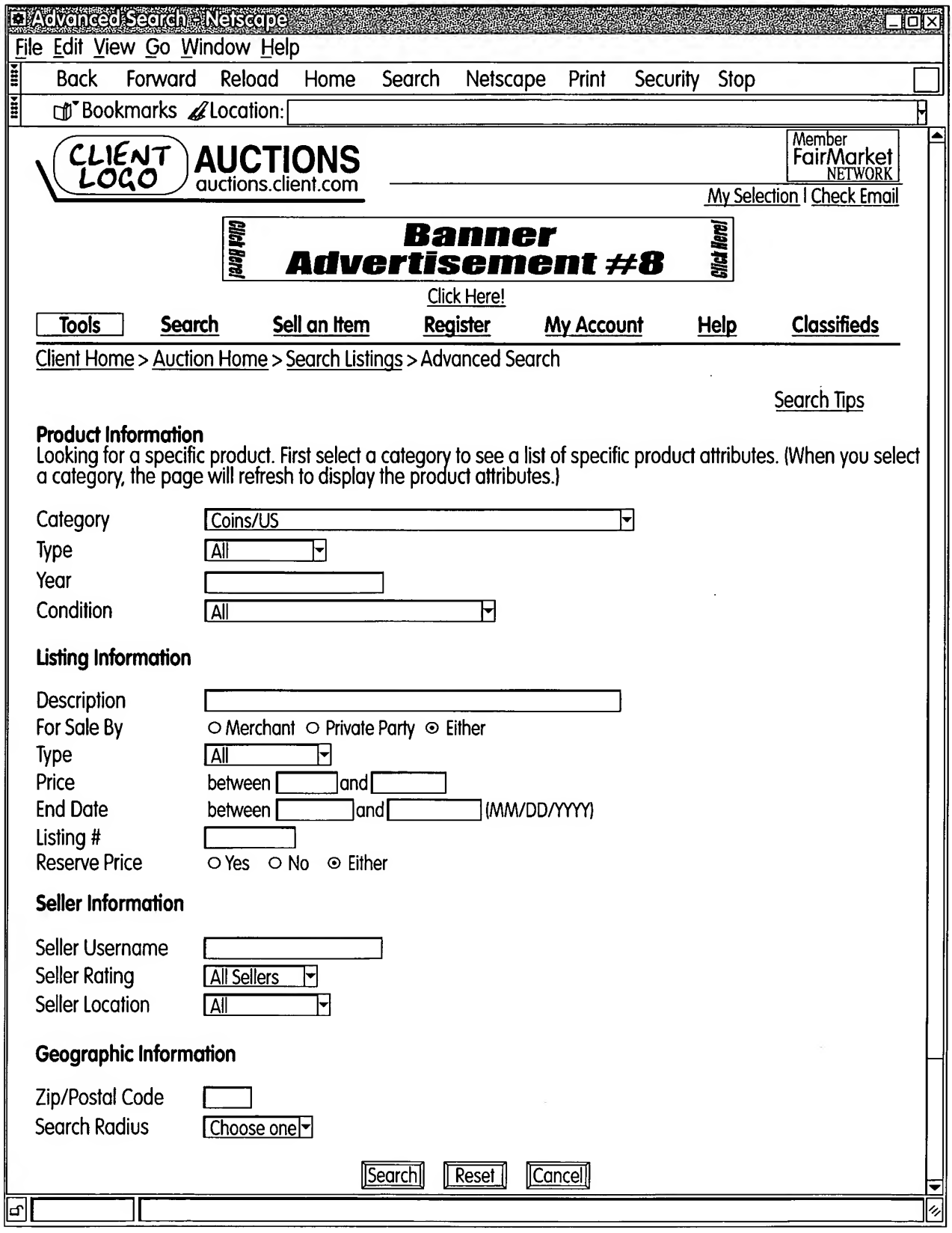
Fig. 11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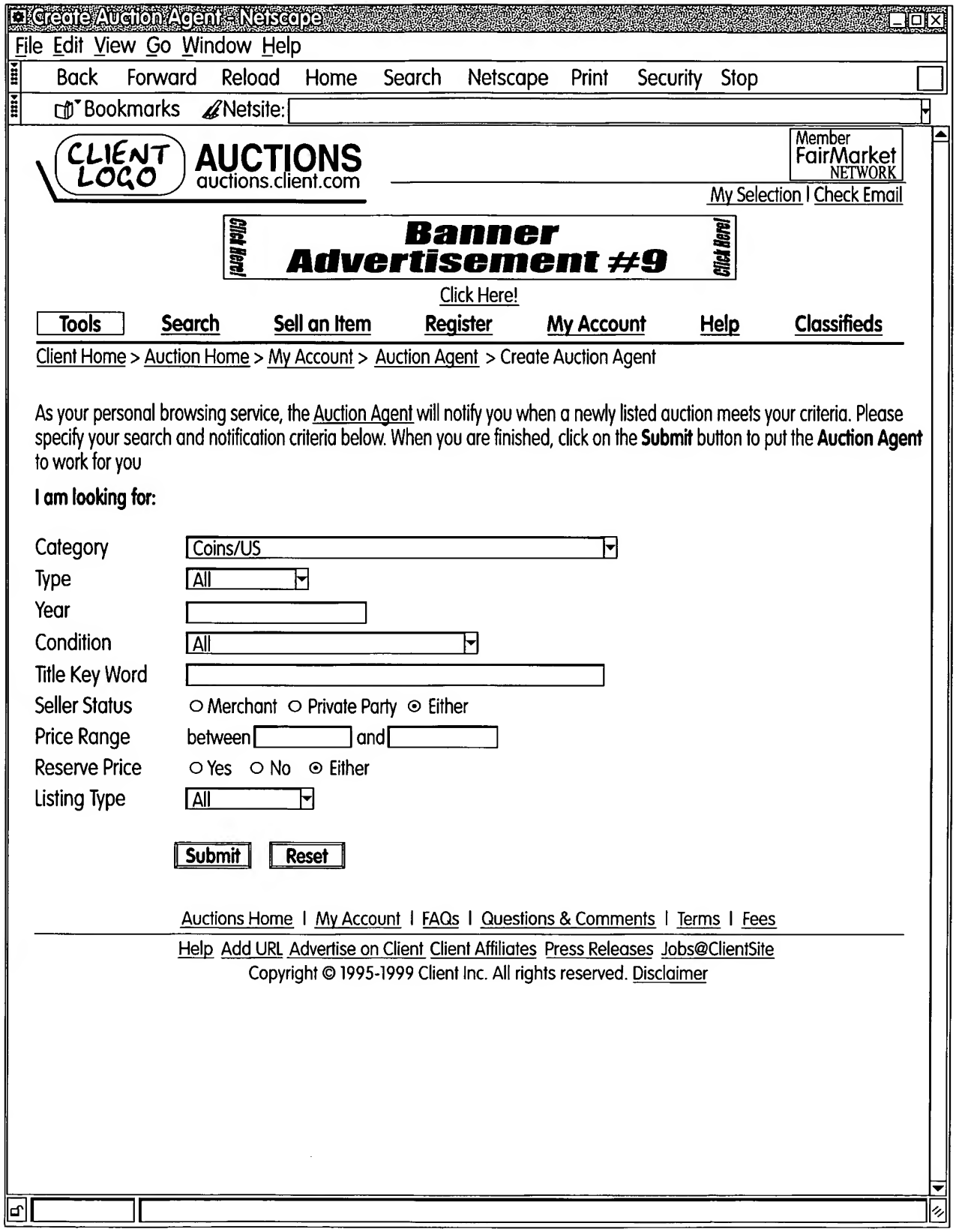
Search Tips
Product Information
Looking for a specific product. First select a category to see a list of specific product attributes. (When you select a category, the page will refresh to display the product attributes.)
Category Coins/US
Type All
Year
Condition All
Listing Information
Description
For Sale By O Merchant O Private Party ⊙ Either
Type All
Price between and
End Date between and (MM/DD/YYYY)
Listing #
Reserve Price O Yes O No ⊙ Either
Seller Information
Seller Username
Seller Rating All Sellers
Seller Location All
Geographic Information
Zip/Postal Code
Search Radius Choose one
Search Reset Cancel

Fig. 12


Create Auction Agent - Netscape
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Banner Advertisement #9
Click Here!
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Tools
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Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > My Account > Auction Agent > Create Auction Agent
As your personal browsing service, the Auction Agent will notify you when a newly listed auction meets your criteria. Please specify your search and notification criteria below. When you are finished, click on the Submit button to put the Auction Agent to work for you
I am looking for:
Category Coins/US
Type All
Year
Condition All
Title Key Word
Seller Status O Merchant O Private Party ⊙ Either
Price Range between and
Reserve Price O Yes O No ⊙ Either
Listing Type All
Submit
Reset
Auctions Home | My Account | FAQs | Questions & Comments | Terms | Fees
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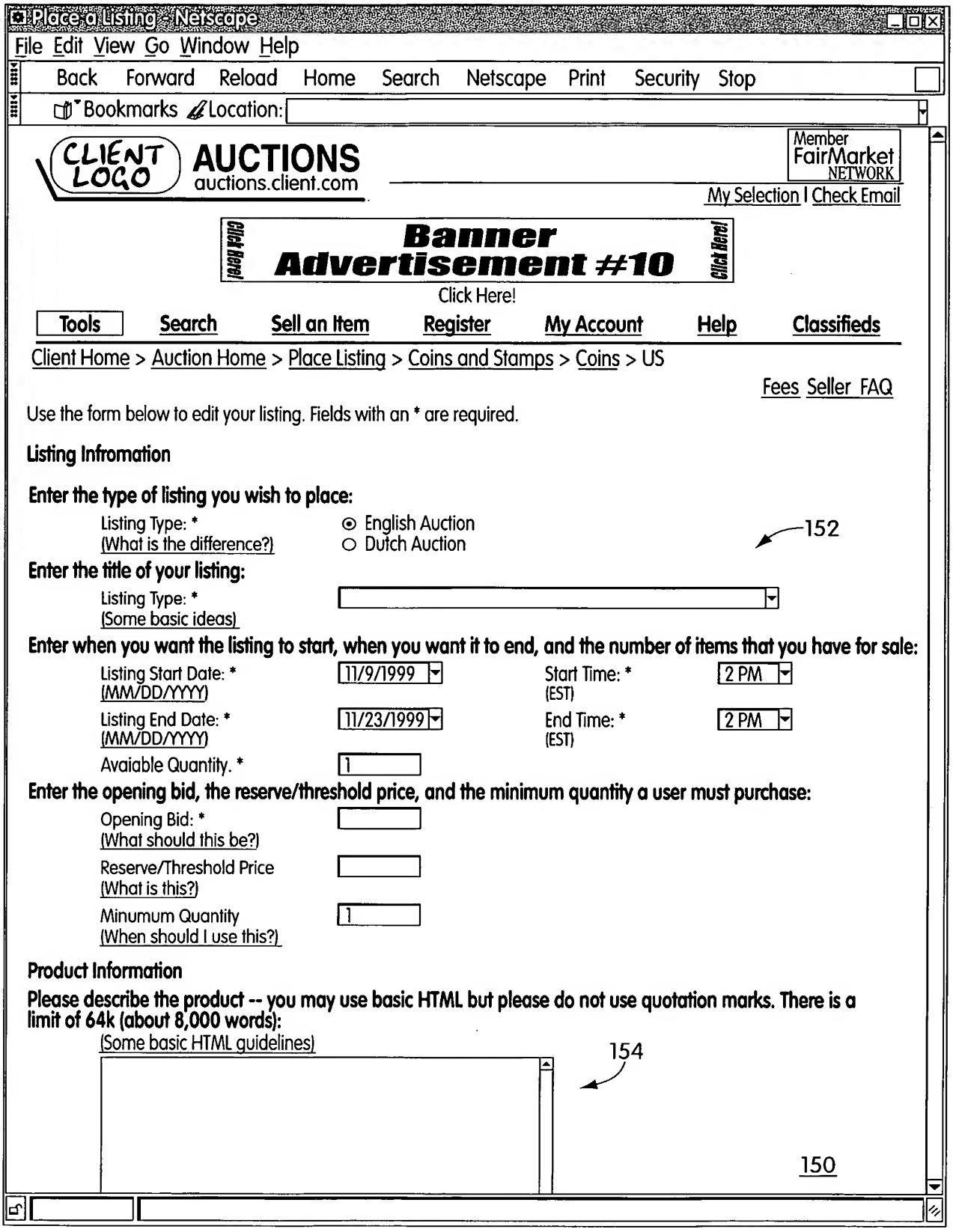
Fig. 13


Place a Listing - Netscape
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AUCTIONS
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Tools Search Sell an Item Register My Account Help Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > Place Listing > Coins and Stamps > Coins > US
Fees Seller FAQ
Use the form below to edit your listing. Fields with an * are required.
Listing Infromation
Enter the type of listing you wish to place:
Listing Type: *
(What is the difference?)
English Auction
Dutch Auction
152
Enter the title of your listing:
Listing Type: *
(Some basic ideas)
Enter when you want the listing to start, when you want it to end, and the number of items that you have for sale:
Listing Start Date: *
(MM/DD/YYYY)
11/9/1999
Start Time: *
(EST)
2 PM
Listing End Date: *
(MM/DD/YYYY)
11/23/1999
End Time: *
(EST)
2 PM
Avaiable Quantity. *
1
Enter the opening bid, the reserve/threshold price, and the minimum quantity a user must purchase:
Opening Bid: *
(What should this be?)
Reserve/Threshold Price
(What is this?)
Minumum Quantity
(When should I use this?)
1
Product Information
Please describe the product -- you may use basic HTML but please do not use quotation marks. There is a limit of 64k (about 8,000 words):
(Some basic HTML guidelines)
154
150

Fig. 14A

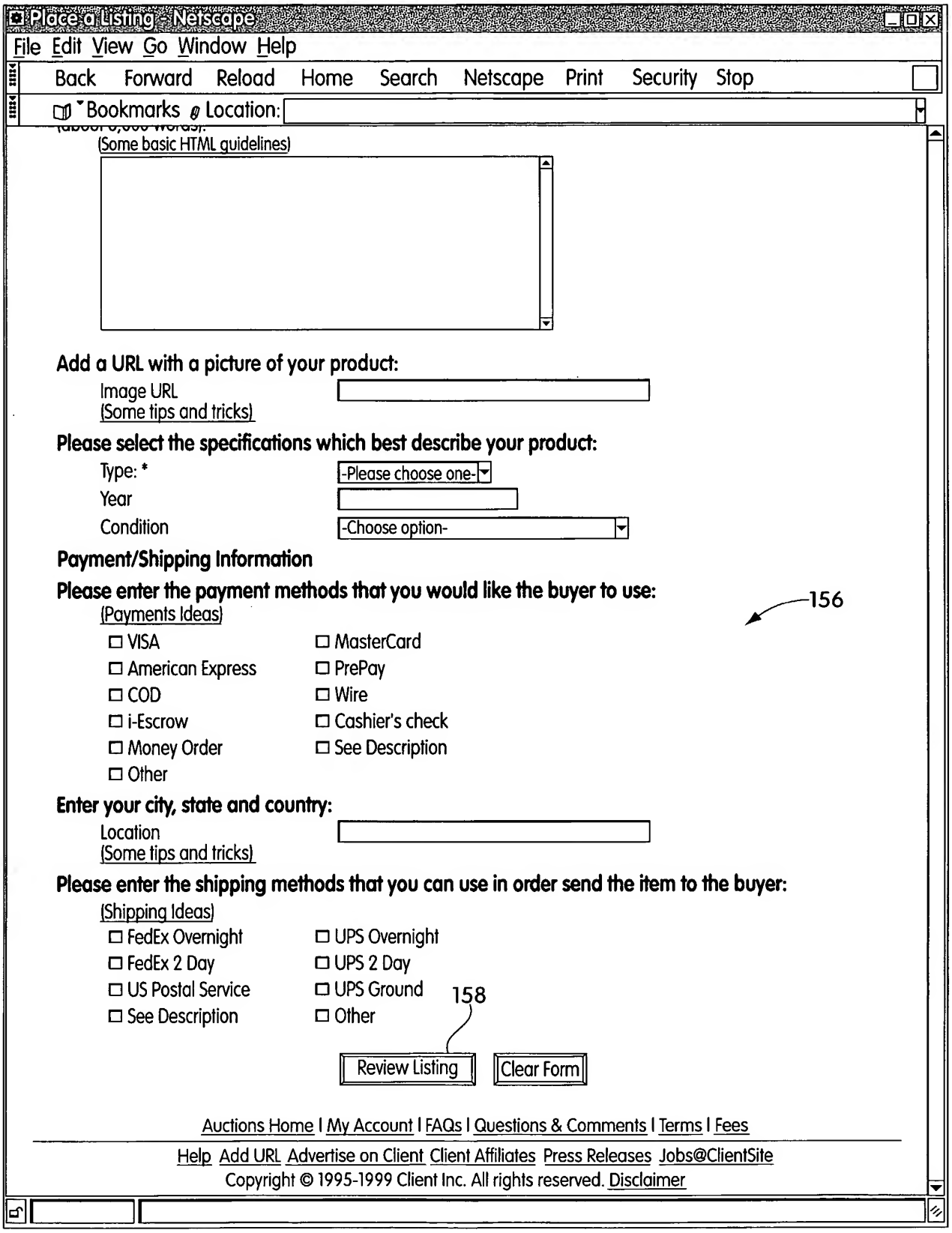
Place a Listing - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
(Some basic HTML guidelines)
Add a URL with a picture of your product:
Image URL
(Some tips and tricks)
Please select the specifications which best describe your product:
Type: *
-Please choose one-
Year
Condition
-Choose option-
Payment/Shipping Information
Please enter the payment methods that you would like the buyer to use:
156
(Payments Ideas)
VISA
MasterCard
American Express
PrePay
COD
Wire
i-Escrow
Cashier's check
Money Order
See Description
Other
Enter your city, state and country:
Location
(Some tips and tricks)
Please enter the shipping methods that you can use in order send the item to the buyer:
(Shipping Ideas)
FedEx Overnight
UPS Overnight
FedEx 2 Day
UPS 2 Day
US Postal Service
UPS Ground
See Description
Other
158
Review Listing
Clear Form
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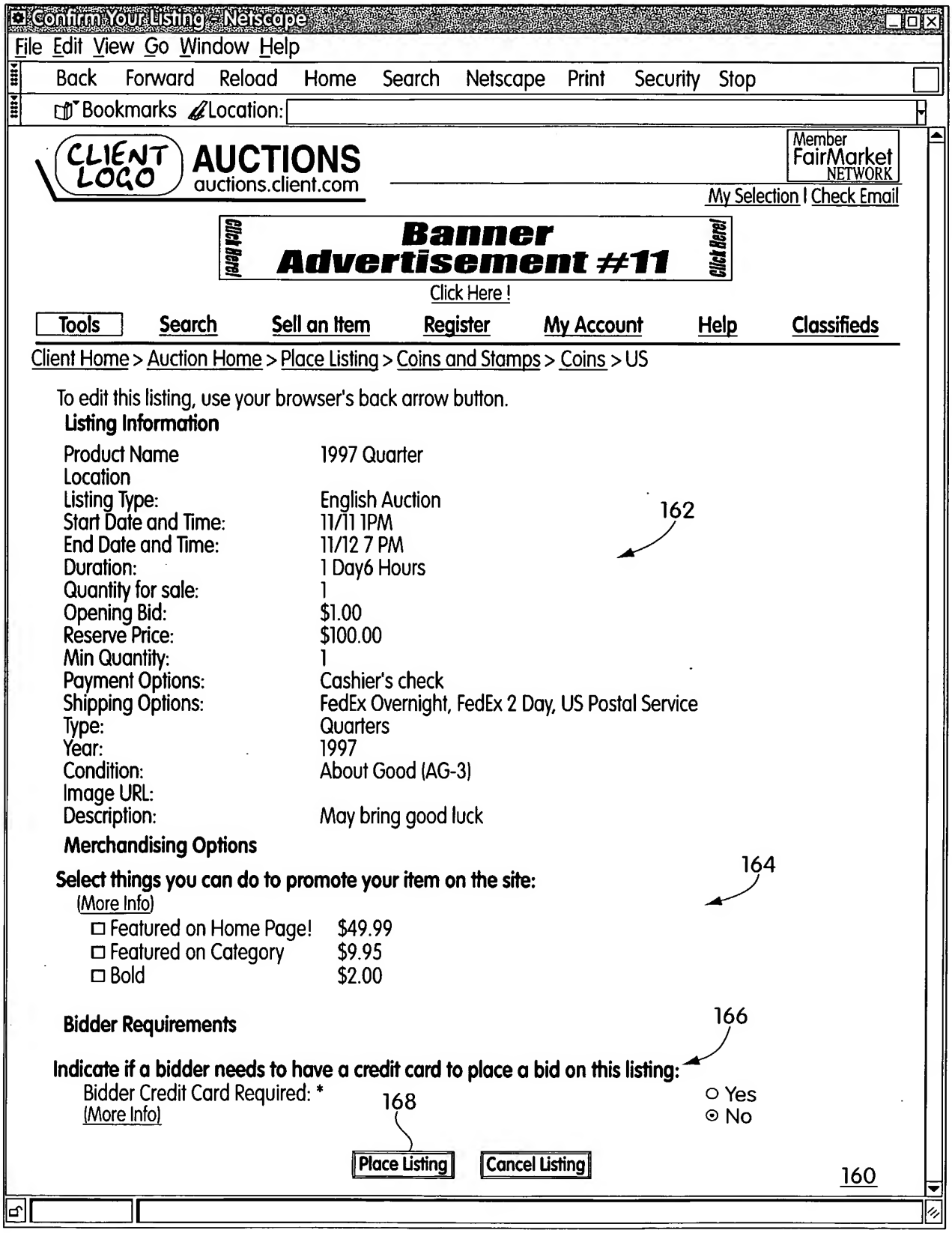
Fig. 14B


Confirm Your Listing - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
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AUCTIONS
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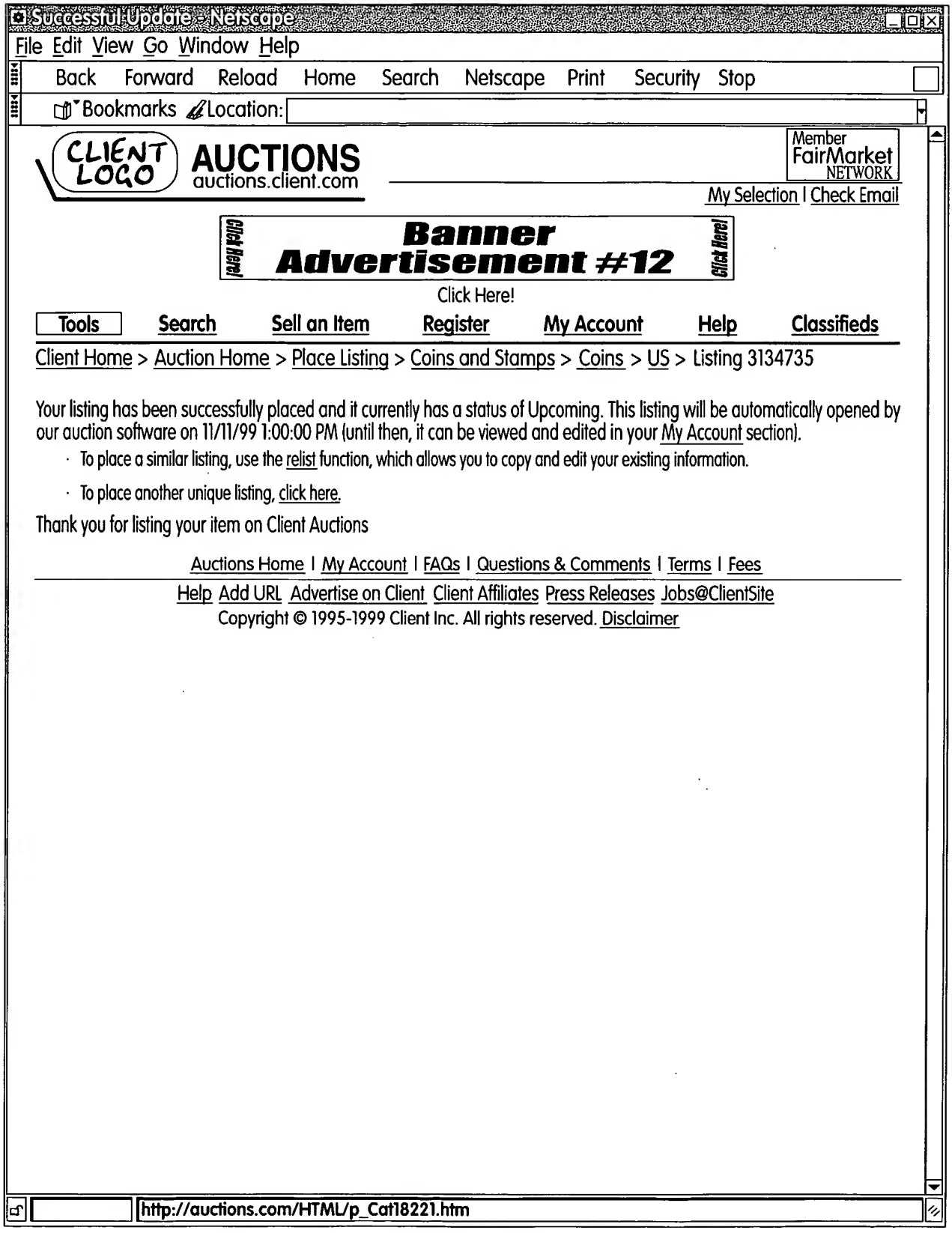
Click Here!
Banner Advertisement #11
Click Here!
Click Here !
Tools Search Sell an Item Register My Account Help Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > Place Listing > Coins and Stamps > Coins > US
To edit this listing, use your browser's back arrow button.
Listing Information
Product Name 1997 Quarter
Location
Listing Type: English Auction
Start Date and Time: 11/11 1PM
End Date and Time: 11/12 7 PM
Duration: 1 Day6 Hours
Quantity for sale: 1
Opening Bid: $1.00
Reserve Price: $100.00
Min Quantity: 1
Payment Options: Cashier's check
Shipping Options: FedEx Overnight, FedEx 2 Day, US Postal Service
Type: Quarters
Year: 1997
Condition: About Good (AG-3)
Image URL:
Description: May bring good luck
162
Merchandising Options
Select things you can do to promote your item on the site:
(More Info)
☐ Featured on Home Page! $49.99
☐ Featured on Category $9.95
☐ Bold $2.00
164
Bidder Requirements
Indicate if a bidder needs to have a credit card to place a bid on this listing:
Bidder Credit Card Required: *
(More Info)
○ Yes
⊙ No
166
168
Place Listing
Cancel Listing
160

Fig. 15


Successful Update - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
CLIENT LOGO
AUCTIONS
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Click Here!
Tools Search Sell an Item Register My Account Help Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > Place Listing > Coins and Stamps > Coins > US > Listing 3134735
Your listing has been successfully placed and it currently has a status of Upcoming. This listing will be automatically opened by our auction software on 11/11/99 1:00:00 PM (until then, it can be viewed and edited in your My Account section).
· To place a similar listing, use the relist function, which allows you to copy and edit your existing information.
· To place another unique listing, click here.
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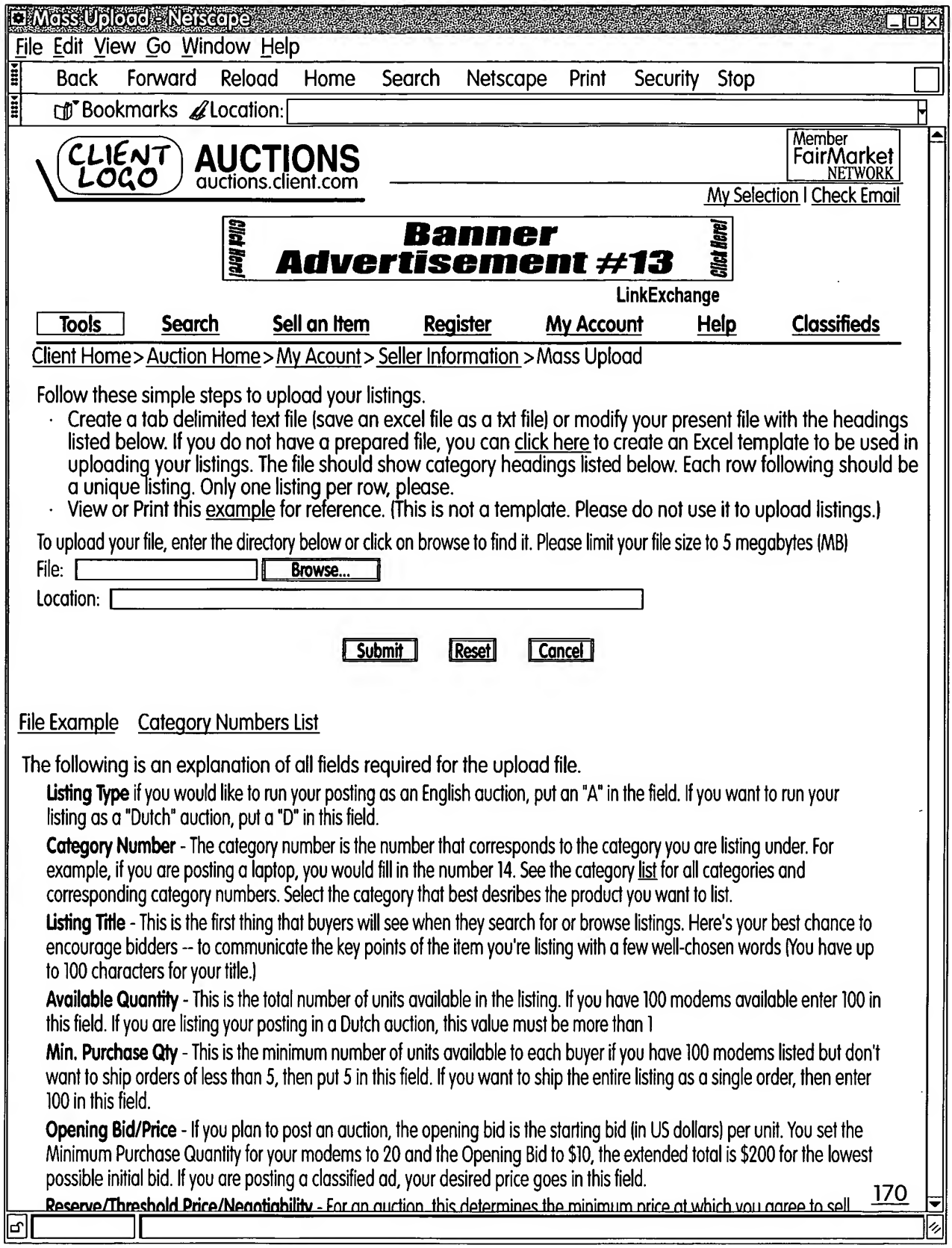
http://auctions.com/HTML/p_Cat18221.htm

Fig. 16


Mass Upload - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
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AUCTIONS
auctions.client.com
Member FairMarket NETWORK
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Click Here!
Banner Advertisement #13
Click Here!
LinkExchange
Tools
Search
Sell an Item
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My Account
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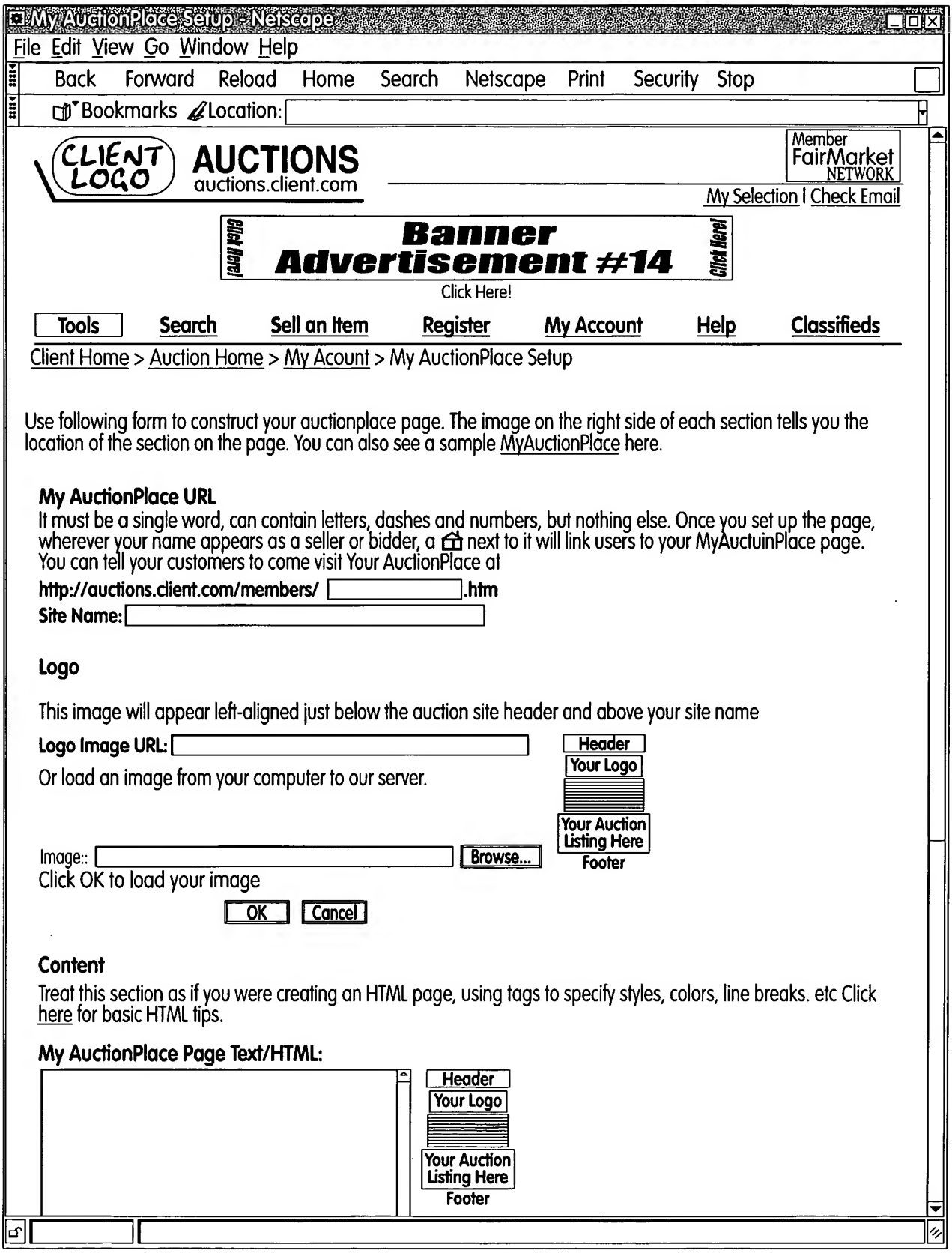
Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > My Acount > Seller Information > Mass Upload
Follow these simple steps to upload your listings.
· Create a tab delimited text file (save an excel file as a txt file) or modify your present file with the headings listed below. If you do not have a prepared file, you can click here to create an Excel template to be used in uploading your listings. The file should show category headings listed below. Each row following should be a unique listing. Only one listing per row, please.
· View or Print this example for reference. (This is not a template. Please do not use it to upload listings.)
To upload your file, enter the directory below or click on browse to find it. Please limit your file size to 5 megabytes (MB)
File:
Browse...
Location:
Submit
Reset
Cancel
File Example
Category Numbers List
The following is an explanation of all fields required for the upload file.
Listing Type if you would like to run your posting as an English auction, put an "A" in the field. If you want to run your listing as a "Dutch" auction, put a "D" in this field.
Category Number - The category number is the number that corresponds to the category you are listing under. For example, if you are posting a laptop, you would fill in the number 14. See the category list for all categories and corresponding category numbers. Select the category that best desribes the product you want to list.
Listing Title - This is the first thing that buyers will see when they search for or browse listings. Here's your best chance to encourage bidders -- to communicate the key points of the item you're listing with a few well-chosen words (You have up to 100 characters for your title.)
Available Quantity - This is the total number of units available in the listing. If you have 100 modems available enter 100 in this field. If you are listing your posting in a Dutch auction, this value must be more than 1
Min. Purchase Qty - This is the minimum number of units available to each buyer if you have 100 modems listed but don't want to ship orders of less than 5, then put 5 in this field. If you want to ship the entire listing as a single order, then enter 100 in this field.
Opening Bid/Price - If you plan to post an auction, the opening bid is the starting bid (in US dollars) per unit. You set the Minimum Purchase Quantity for your modems to 20 and the Opening Bid to $10, the extended total is $200 for the lowest possible initial bid. If you are posting a classified ad, your desired price goes in this field.
Reserve/Threshold Price/Negotiability - For an auction, this determines the minimum price at which you agree to sell
170

Fig. 17


My AuctionPlace Setup - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
CLIENT LOGO
AUCTIONS
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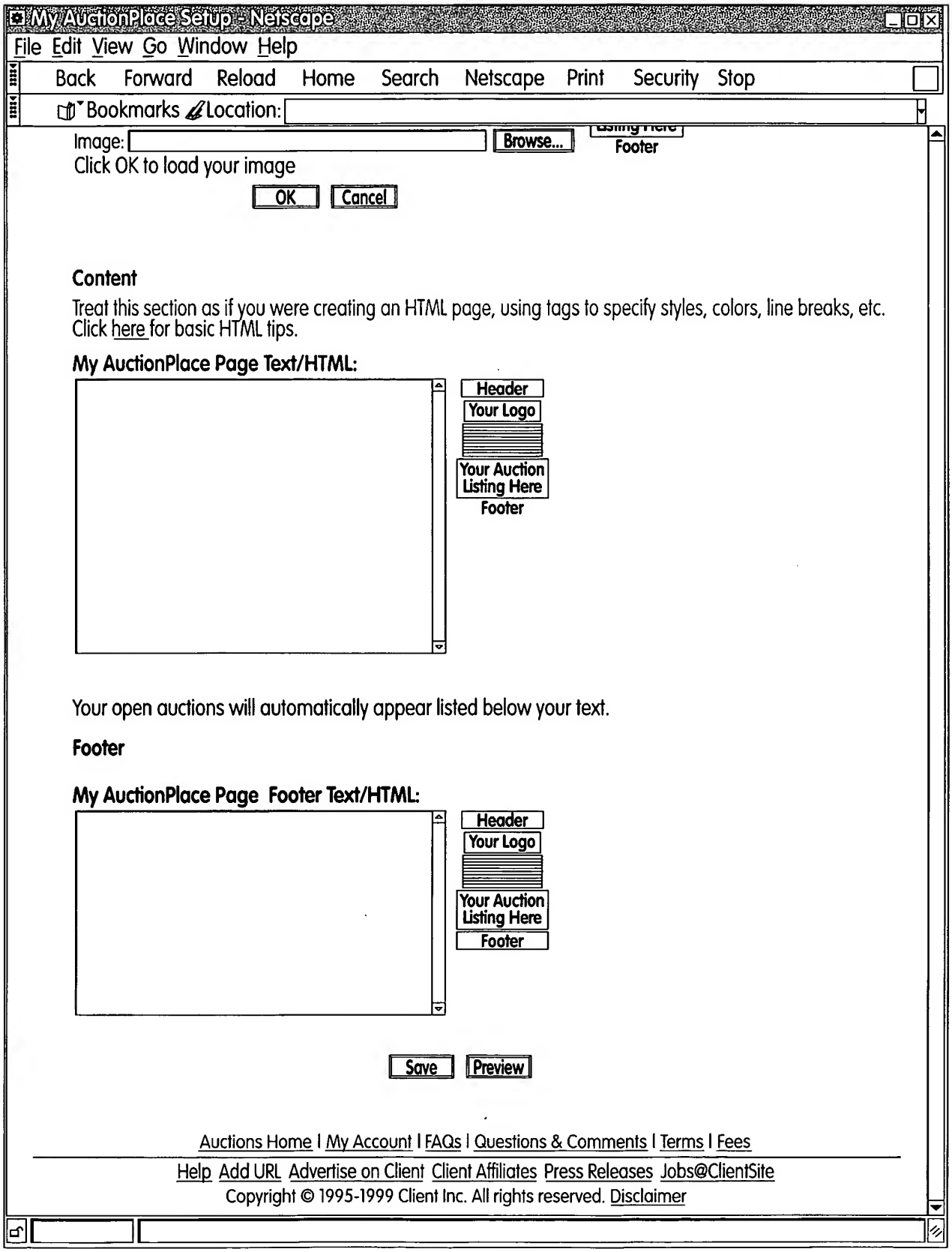
Banner Advertisement #14
Click Here!
Click Here!
Tools Search Sell an Item Register My Account Help Classifieds
Client Home > Auction Home > My Acount > My AuctionPlace Setup
Use following form to construct your auctionplace page. The image on the right side of each section tells you the location of the section on the page. You can also see a sample MyAuctionPlace here.
My AuctionPlace URL
It must be a single word, can contain letters, dashes and numbers, but nothing else. Once you set up the page, wherever your name appears as a seller or bidder, a next to it will link users to your MyAuctuinPlace page. You can tell your customers to come visit Your AuctionPlace at
http://auctions.client.com/members/ .htm
Site Name:
Logo
This image will appear left-aligned just below the auction site header and above your site name
Logo Image URL:
Or load an image from your computer to our server.
Header
Your Logo
Your Auction Listing Here
Footer
Image::
Browse...
Click OK to load your image
OK
Cancel
Content
Treat this section as if you were creating an HTML page, using tags to specify styles, colors, line breaks. etc Click here for basic HTML tips.
My AuctionPlace Page Text/HTML:
Header
Your Logo
Your Auction Listing Here
Footer

Fig. 18A


My AuctionPlace Setup - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
Image:
Browse...
Footer
Click OK to load your image
OK
Cancel
Content
Treat this section as if you were creating an HTML page, using tags to specify styles, colors, line breaks, etc.
Click here for basic HTML tips.
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Your Logo
Your Auction Listing Here
Footer
Your open auctions will automatically appear listed below your text.
Footer
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Header
Your Logo
Your Auction Listing Here
Footer
Save
Preview
Auctions Home | My Account | FAQs | Questions & Comments | Terms | Fees
Help Add URL Advertise on Client Client Affiliates Press Releases Jobs@ClientSite
Copyright © 1995-1999 Client Inc. All rights reserved. Disclaimer

Fig. 18B

Admin Tools - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
User Name: JonJohns
Role: Setup
Site Name: FairMarket
New Login
Go To Site
Admin Help
Auction Snapshot
Last Update: 11/11/1999 6:00:00 AM
Today (Updated Hourly)
Yesterday
Week-To-Date
Last Week
New Customers 0 2 17 38
Bids Placed 0 1 20 36
Listings Placed 331 183 2611 1937
Transaction Closed $7.00 $215.10 $1,495.27 $8,081.92
WebTrends Reports...
Reports...
Site Setup
User Interface
User Options
Product Categories
Merchandising Options
Custom Pages
Fee Schedule
Email Module
Listing Options
Image Upload
File Upload

Fig. 19

Admin - User Interface - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket Auction Admin
User Interface
Admin Home | User Interface
Admin Help
Layout HTML
Please use the link below to edit the HTML in each page template
HTML Page Templates
Layout Options
Show Auction Clock:
English Auction Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/A.gif
Dutch Auction Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/D.gif
QuikWin Auction Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/Q.gif
Classified Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/C.gif
Reserve Price Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/R.gif
Merchant Listing Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/finalstar.gif
Listing Photo Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/camera1.gif
Hot Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/hot1.gif
New Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/new.gif
AuctionPlace User Image: http://images.fairmarket.com/images/auctionplaceuser.gif
Default Ad RefNo:
Show Counts:
Publish

Fig. 20

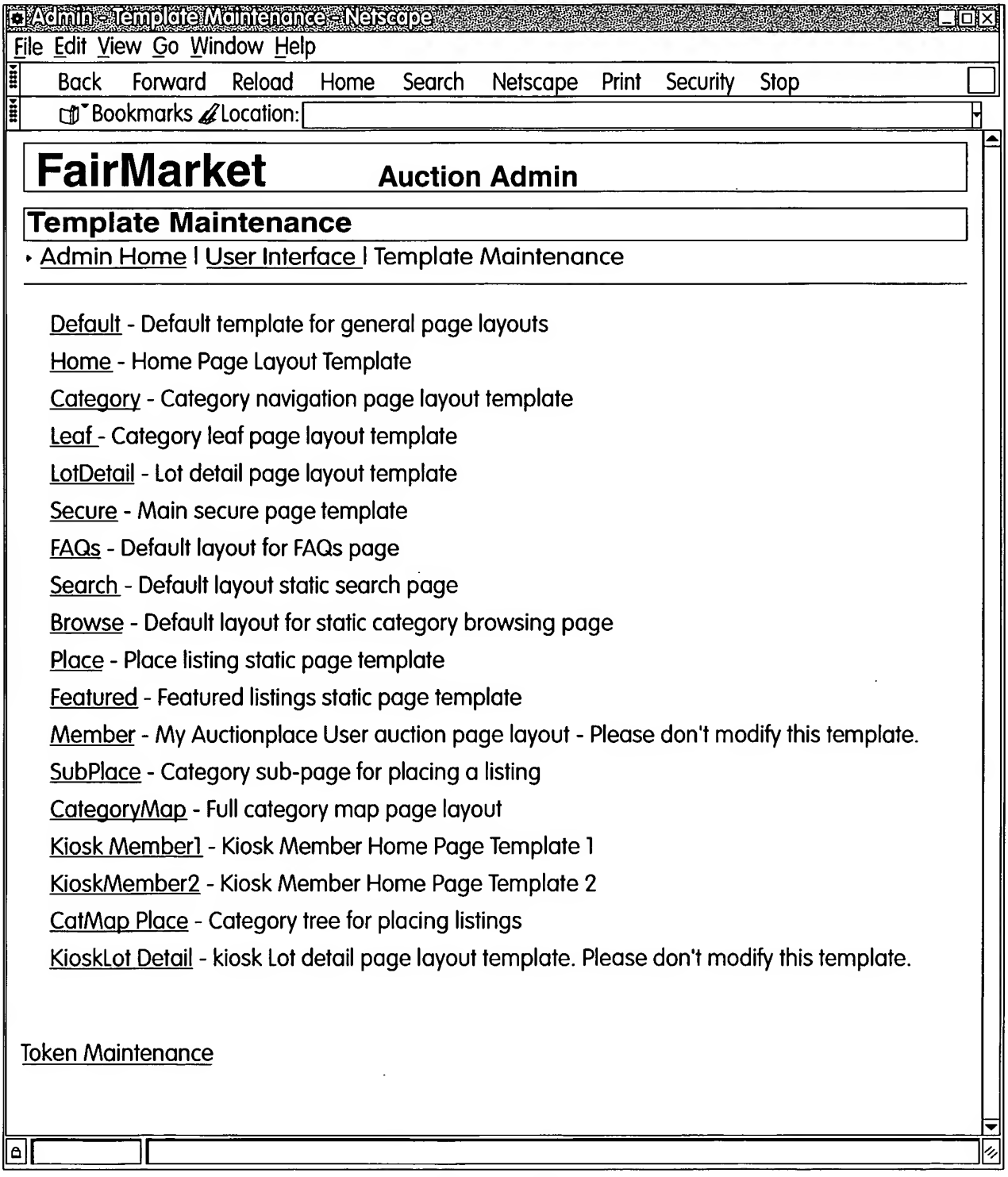
Admin - Template Maintenance - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket Auction Admin
Template Maintenance
Admin Home | User Interface | Template Maintenance
Default - Default template for general page layouts
Home - Home Page Layout Template
Category - Category navigation page layout template
Leaf - Category leaf page layout template
LotDetail - Lot detail page layout template
Secure - Main secure page template
FAQs - Default layout for FAQs page
Search - Default layout static search page
Browse - Default layout for static category browsing page
Place - Place listing static page template
Featured - Featured listings static page template
Member - My Auctionplace User auction page layout - Please don't modify this template.
SubPlace - Category sub-page for placing a listing
CategoryMap - Full category map page layout
Kiosk Member1 - Kiosk Member Home Page Template 1
KioskMember2 - Kiosk Member Home Page Template 2
CatMap Place - Category tree for placing listings
KioskLot Detail - kiosk Lot detail page layout template. Please don't modify this template.
Token Maintenance

Fig. 21

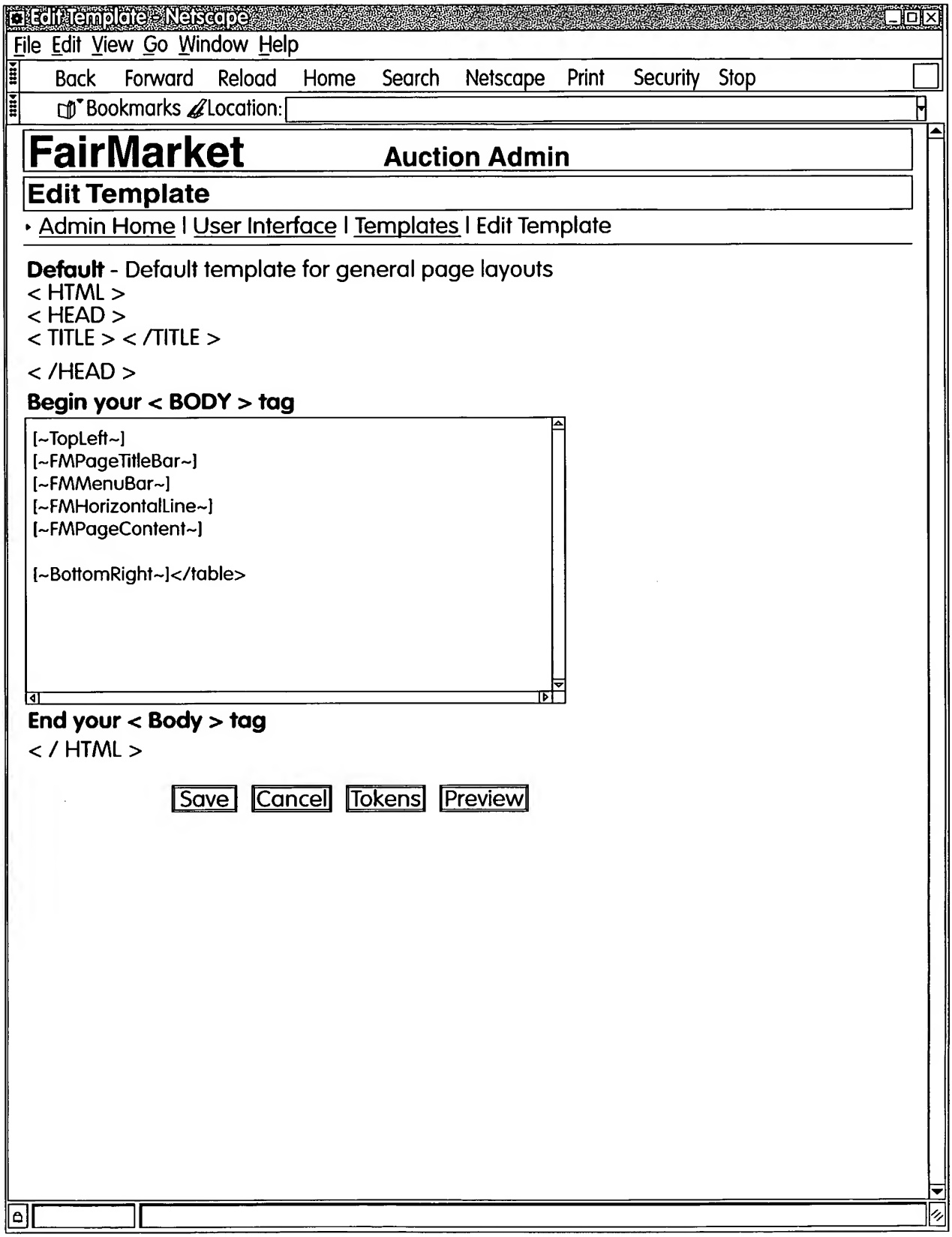
Edit Template - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
Edit Template
Admin Home | User Interface | Templates | Edit Template
Default - Default template for general page layouts
< HTML >
< HEAD >
< TITLE > < /TITLE >
< /HEAD >
Begin your < BODY > tag
[~TopLeft~]
[~FMPageTitleBar~]
[~FMMenuBar~]
[~FMHorizontalLine~]
[~FMPageContent~]
[~BottomRight~]</table>
End your < Body > tag
< / HTML >
Save
Cancel
Tokens
Preview

Fig. 22

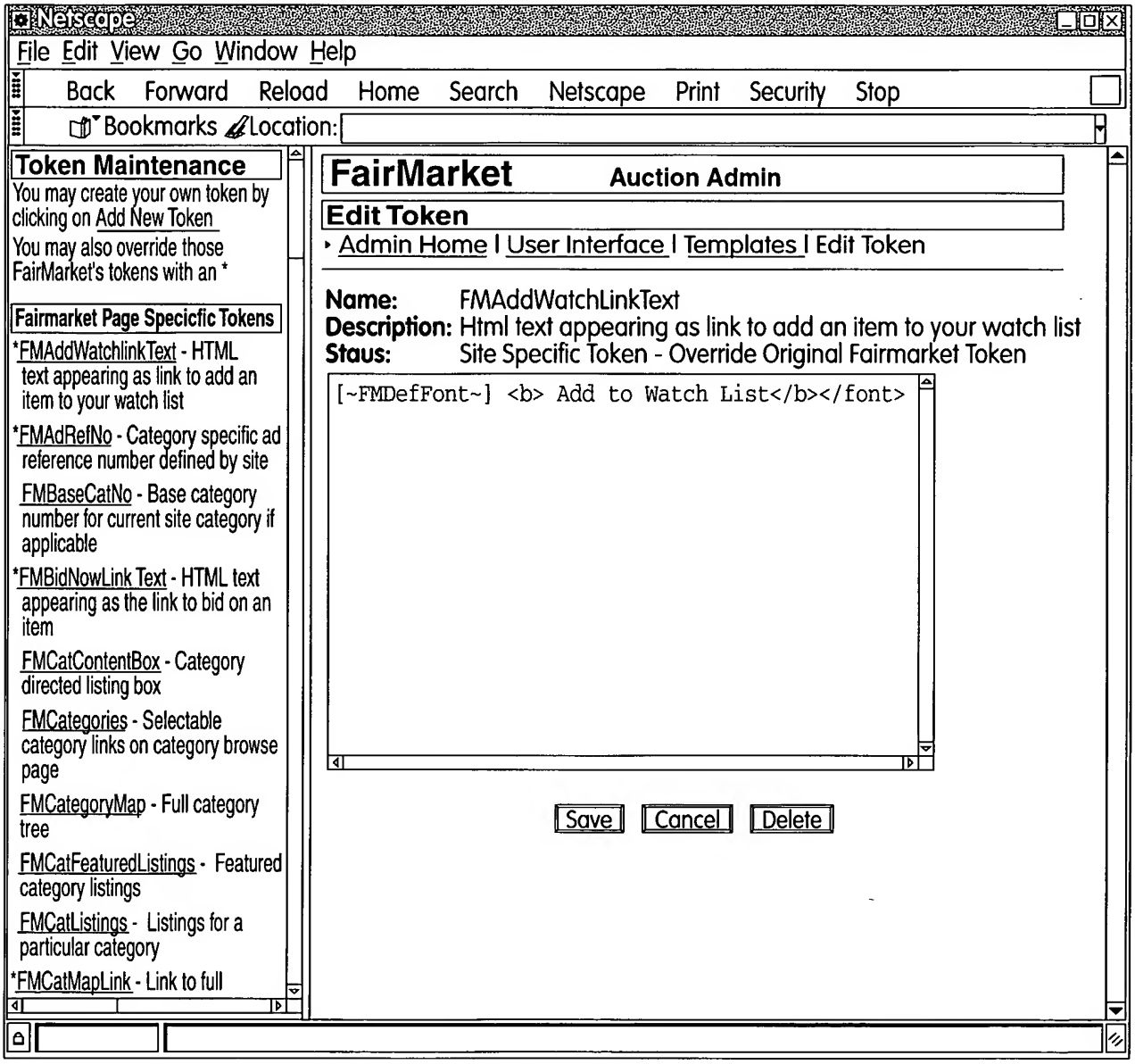
Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
Token Maintenance
You may create your own token by clicking on Add New Token
You may also override those FairMarket's tokens with an *
Fairmarket Page Specicfic Tokens
*FMAddWatchlinkText - HTML text appearing as link to add an item to your watch list
*FMAdRefNo - Category specific ad reference number defined by site
FMBaseCatNo - Base category number for current site category if applicable
*FMBidNowLink Text - HTML text appearing as the link to bid on an item
FMCatContentBox - Category directed listing box
FMCategories - Selectable category links on category browse page
FMCategoryMap - Full category tree
FMCatFeaturedListings - Featured category listings
FMCatListings - Listings for a particular category
*FMCatMapLink - Link to full
FairMarket Auction Admin
Edit Token
Admin Home | User Interface | Templates | Edit Token
Name: FMAddWatchLinkText
Description: Html text appearing as link to add an item to your watch list
Staus: Site Specific Token - Override Original Fairmarket Token
[~FMDefFont~] Add to Watch List
Save
Cancel
Delete

Fig. 23

Admin - Template Tokens - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket Auction Admin
Template Tokens
Admin Home | User Interface | Templates | Edit Template | Template Tokens
Applicable tokens for template: Default
An * in front of your Site Defined Tokens means that your site has overridden the Fairmarket defined token of the same name. It should be noted that your Site Override token always takes precedence over Fairmarket token.
Fairmarket Page Tokens
[~FMPageContent~]
Fairmarket Non Page Tokens
[~FMAdvancedSearchLink~] [~FMAuctionAgentLink~] [~FMBuyerHelpLink~]
[~FMCatBullet~] [~FMDefFont~] [~FMDefFontColor~]
[~FMDefFontFace~] [~FMDefFontSize~] [~FMDivColor~]
[~FMDivTextColor~] [~FMEscrowLink~] [~FMFAQsLink~]
[~FMGetStartedLink~] [~FMHorizontalLine~] [~FMLargeFont~]
[~FMLeftColWidth~] [~FMListingBody~] [~FMListingFeeLink~]
[~FMListingFooter~] [~FMListingHeader~] [~FMLogoutLink~]
[~FMLotLabelBGColor~] [~FMLotSpecInfo~] [~FMMemberSiteProfile~]
[~FMMenuSeparator~] [~FMMyAccountLink~] [~FMMyNewAuctionLink~]
[~FMPageTitleBar~] [~FMPageWidth~] [~FMPlaceListingLink~]
[~FMRightColWidth~] [~FMSearchBox~] [~FMSearchListingLink~]
[~FMSellerHelpLink~] [~FMSideBar~] [~FMSignupLink~]
[~FMSiteName~] [~FMTermsLink~] [~FMUploadLink~]
[~FMWatchListLink~]
Your Site Defined Tokens
[~BottomRight~] *[~FMAddWatchLinkText~] *[~FMCatBullet~]
*[~FMDivColor~] *[~FMDivTextColor~] *[~FMListingBody~]
*[~FMMenuSeparartor~] *[~FMSearchBox~] *[~FMTermsLink~]
[~HomePageText~] [~MetaText~] [~PreviewHeader~]
[~Reeltop~] [~SecBottomRight~] [~SecTopLeft~]
[~TopLeft~]

Fig. 24

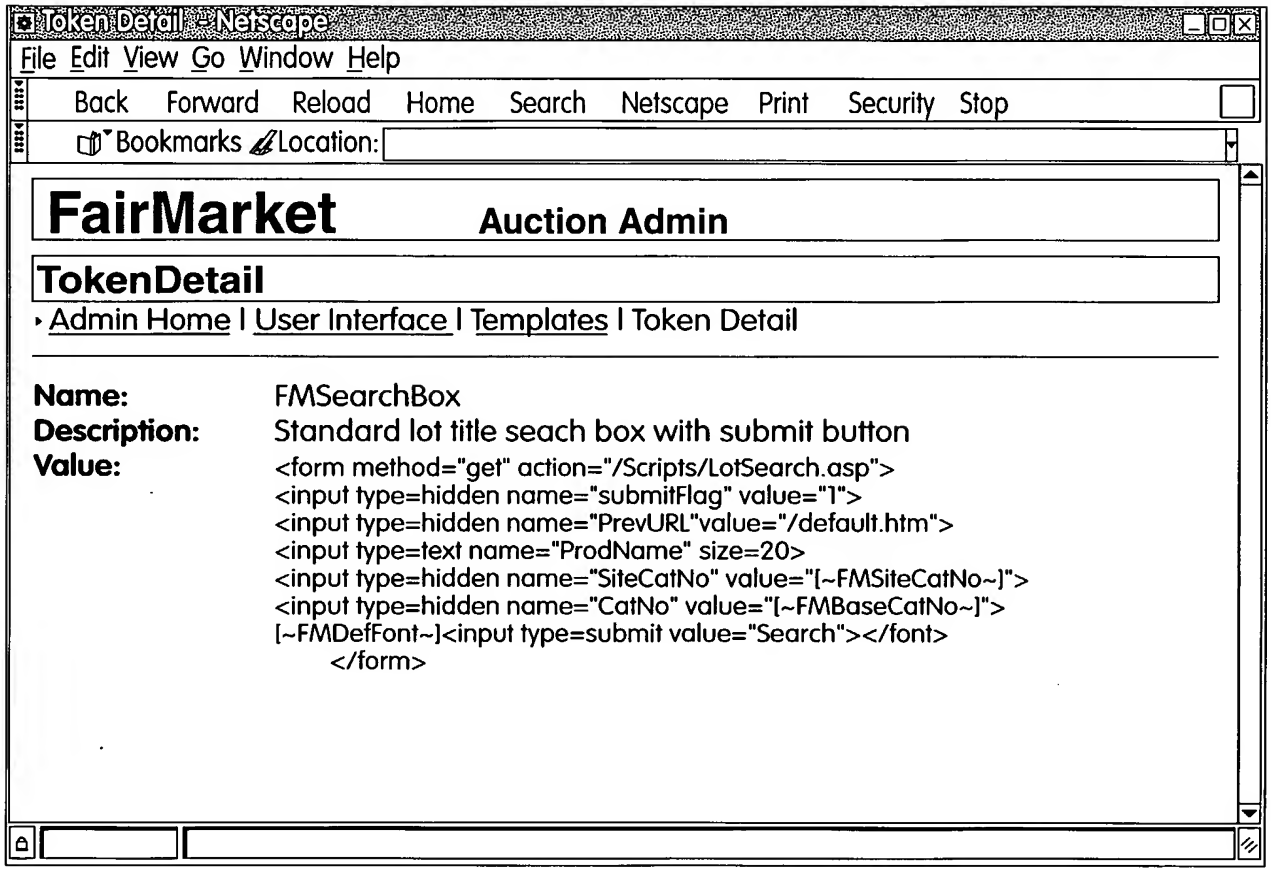
Token Detail - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
TokenDetail
Admin Home | User Interface | Templates | Token Detail
Name: FMSearchBox
Description: Standard lot title seach box with submit button
Value:
<form method="get" action="/Scripts/LotSearch.asp">
<input type=hidden name="submitFlag" value="1">
<input type=hidden name="PrevURL"value="/default.htm">
<input type=text name="ProdName" size=20>
<input type=hidden name="SiteCatNo" value="[~FMSiteCatNo~]">
<input type=hidden name="CatNo" value="[~FMBaseCatNo~]">
[~FMDefFont~]<input type=submit value="Search">
</form>

Fig. 25

Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
Category Tree
Computers
Entertainment, Gifts, Travel
Equipment & Supplies
General Merchandise
Vehicles
FairMarket Auction Admin
Category Tree
Admin Home | Category Tree
Admin Help
The category tree is shown to the left. To view or edit a category, click on the category name. To expand the tree,click on the box next to the category. All sub-categories will be shown underneath the parent category.
In order to start your free or a new branch, you need to add a new top level category.
You can map your categories to FairMarket defined categories if you have already mapped your categories, see existing mapping

Fig. 26

Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
Category Tree
Computers
Entertainment, Gifts, Travel
Equipment & Supplies
General Merchandise
Vehicles
FairMarket Auction Admin
Category Information
Admin Home | Category Tree | Computers
Category Details
Modify Delete Add a Sub-Category
Name: Computers
Description: Systems, Storage, Peripherals, Networking, Software
Allow Products: No
Promotion Text:
Cat Ref. No:
Ad Ref. No:
Status: Used
Parent Category [Top Level]

Fig. 27

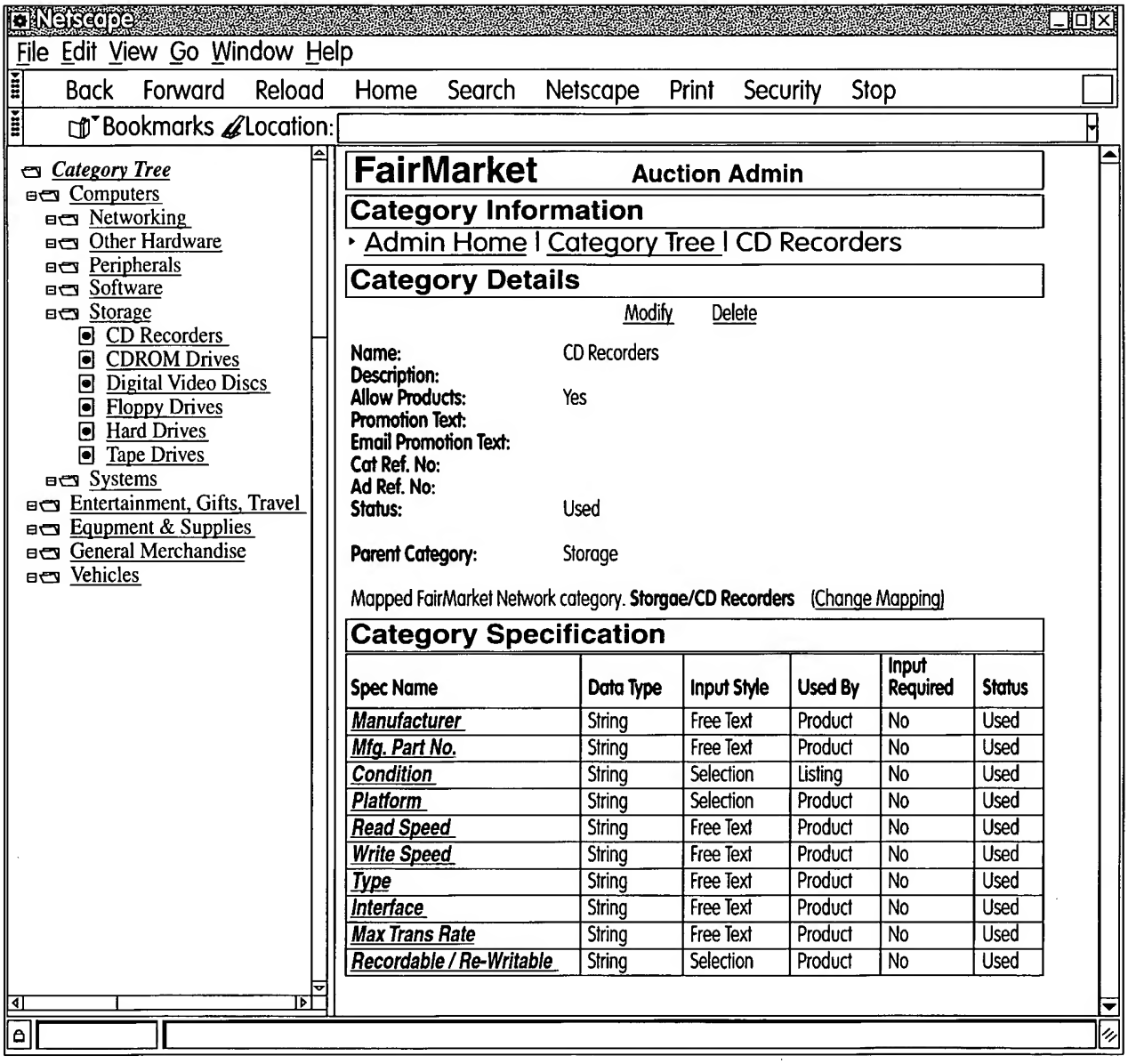
Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
Category Tree
Computers
Networking
Other Hardware
Peripherals
Software
Storage
CD Recorders
CDROM Drives
Digital Video Discs
Floppy Drives
Hard Drives
Tape Drives
Systems
Entertainment, Gifts, Travel
Equipment & Supplies
General Merchandise
Vehicles
FairMarket Auction Admin
Category Information
Admin Home | Category Tree | CD Recorders
Category Details
Modify Delete
Name: CD Recorders
Description:
Allow Products: Yes
Promotion Text:
Email Promotion Text:
Cat Ref. No:
Ad Ref. No:
Status: Used
Parent Category: Storage
Mapped FairMarket Network category. Storgae/CD Recorders (Change Mapping)
Category Specification
Spec Name | Data Type | Input Style | Used By | Input Required | Status
Manufacturer | String | Free Text | Product | No | Used
Mfg. Part No. | String | Free Text | Product | No | Used
Condition | String | Selection | Listing | No | Used
Platform | String | Selection | Product | No | Used
Read Speed | String | Free Text | Product | No | Used
Write Speed | String | Free Text | Product | No | Used
Type | String | Free Text | Product | No | Used
Interface | String | Free Text | Product | No | Used
Max Trans Rate | String | Free Text | Product | No | Used
Recordable / Re-Writable | String | Selection | Product | No | Used

Fig. 28

Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
Category Tree
Computers
Networking
Other Hardware
Peripherals
Software
Storage
CD Recorders
CDROM Drives
Digital Video Discs
Floppy Drives
Hard Drives
Tape Drives
Systems
Entertainment, Gifts, Travel
Equpment & Supplies
General Merchandise
Vehicles
FairMarket Auction Admin
Spec Info
Admin Home | Category Tree | CD Recorders | Spec "Manufacturer"
Spec Details
Spec Name: Manufacturer
Data Type: String
Input Style: Free Text Input
Target: Product
Input Required: No
Status: Used
Category Name: CD Recorders

Fig. 29

Email Module - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
Email Module
Admin Home | Email Module
Admin Help
User Registration
Welcome New User
Password Reminder
Change Email Address
Auction Promotion
Auction Agent
Email Listing
Daily Auction Update
Auction/Buyer
Bid Won
Bid Losing
Bid Winning Again
Bid Won When Closing Early
Bid Lost When Closing Early
Bid Winning With AutoBid
Bid Lost
Bid Confirm
Bid Pending
Auction/Seller
Vendor Notice of Won Bid
Seller Notice of Relisted Lot

Fig. 30

Admin - Welcome - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
Welcome
Admin Home | Email Module | Welcome
From Name:
FairMarket
From Email:
fairmarket@fairmarket.com
Subject:
Welcome!
MessageTemplate:
View Email Tokens
Dear <%FName:> <%LName%>,
Thank you for registering with FairMarket Auctions
For your records,
Your username is <%Username%>.
Your password is <%Password%>.
Please note that once you access your account page
If you have any questions please email registratio
Thank you for choosing FairMarket Auctions as your
http://auctions.FairMarket.com
Save
Cancel

Fig. 31

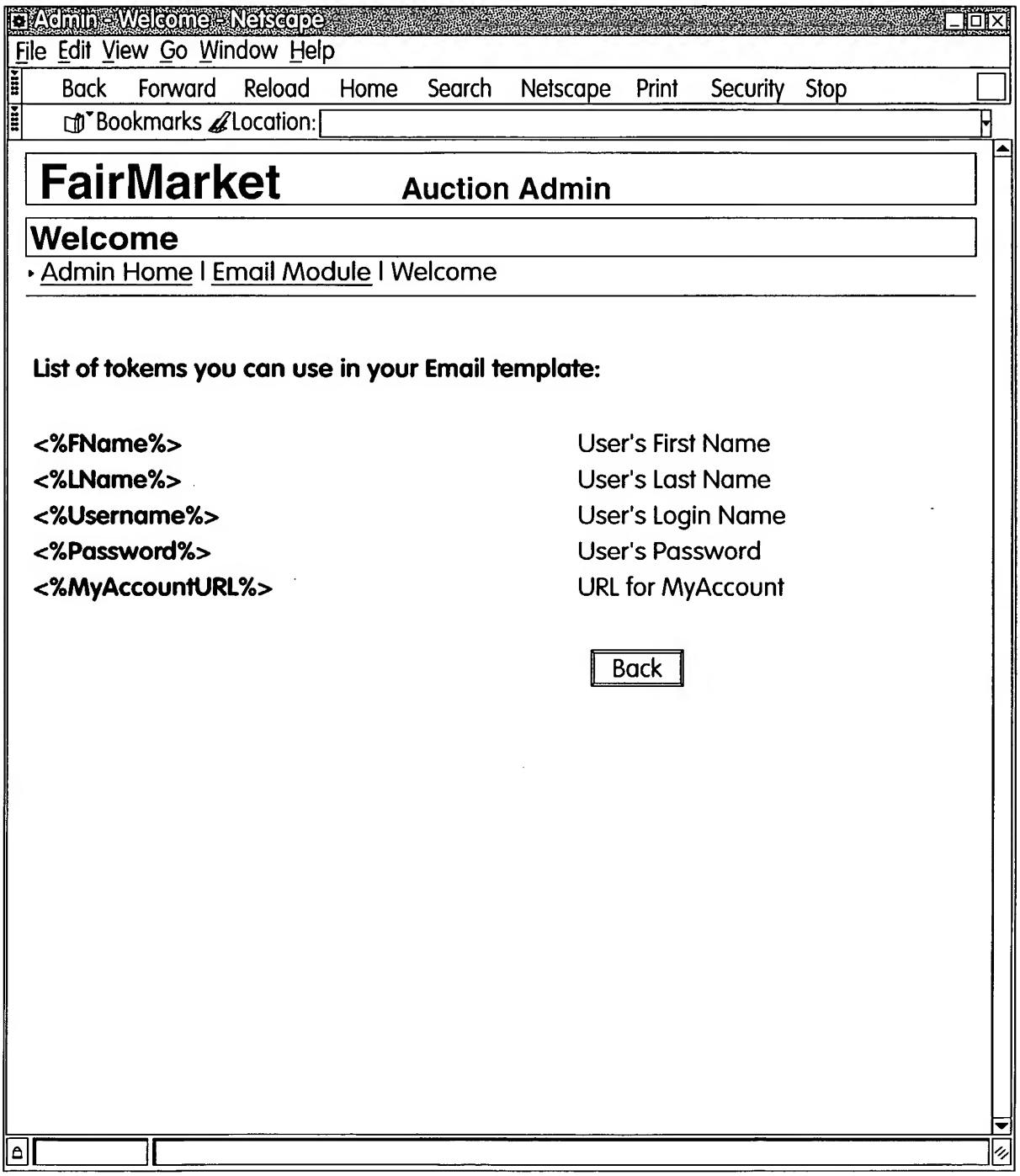
Admin - Welcome - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
Welcome
Admin Home | Email Module | Welcome
List of tokems you can use in your Email template:
<%FName%>
User's First Name
<%LName%>
User's Last Name
<%Username%>
User's Login Name
<%Password%>
User's Password
<%MyAccountURL%>
URL for MyAccount
Back

Fig. 32

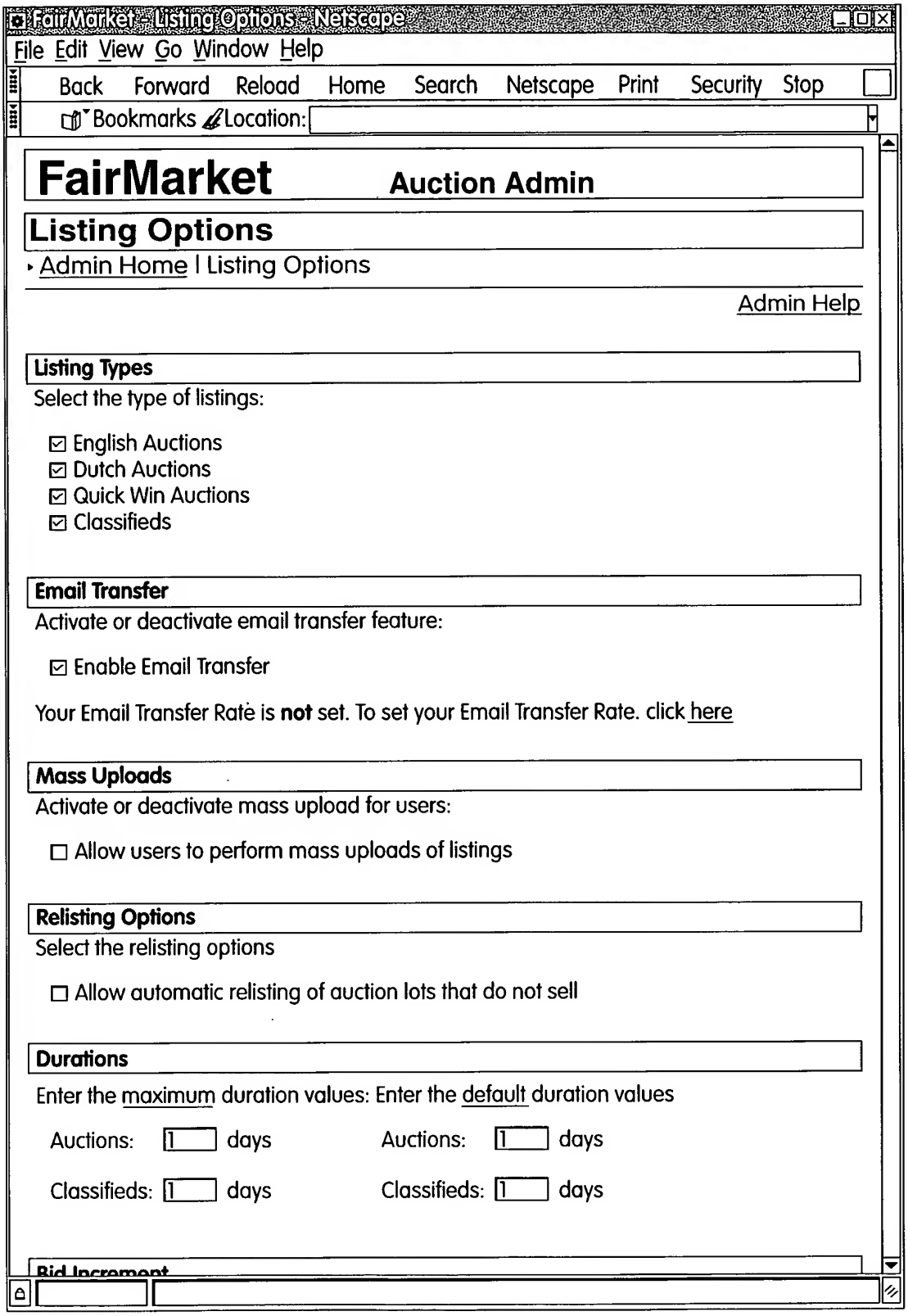
FairMarket - Listing Options - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket Auction Admin
Listing Options
Admin Home | Listing Options
Admin Help
Listing Types
Select the type of listings:
English Auctions
Dutch Auctions
Quick Win Auctions
Classifieds
Email Transfer
Activate or deactivate email transfer feature:
Enable Email Transfer
Your Email Transfer Rate is not set. To set your Email Transfer Rate. click here
Mass Uploads
Activate or deactivate mass upload for users:
Allow users to perform mass uploads of listings
Relisting Options
Select the relisting options
Allow automatic relisting of auction lots that do not sell
Durations
Enter the maximum duration values: Enter the default duration values
Auctions: 1 days
Auctions: 1 days
Classifieds: 1 days
Classifieds: 1 days

Fig. 33A

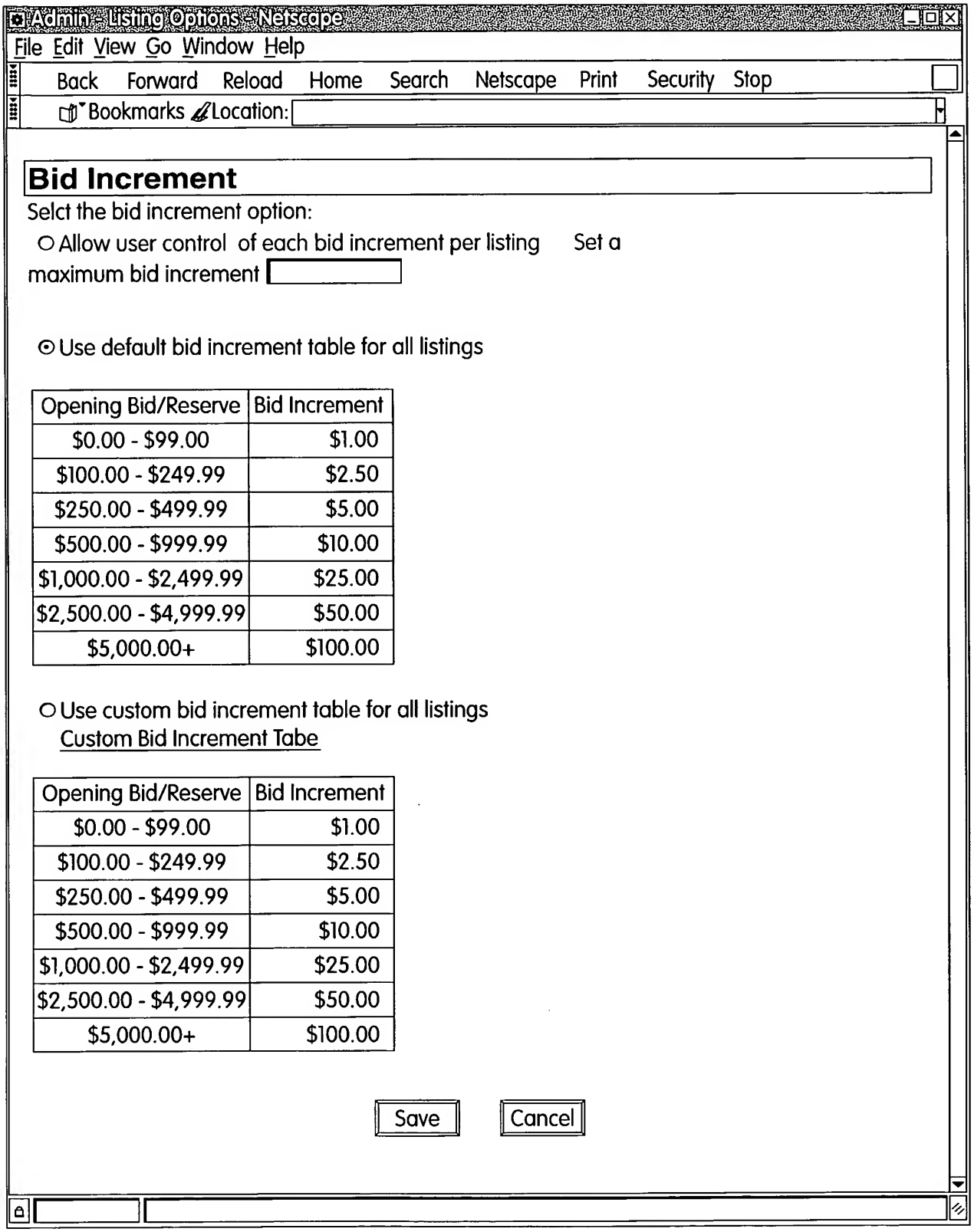
Admin - Listing Options - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
Bid Increment
Selct the bid increment option:
Allow user control of each bid increment per listing Set a maximum bid increment
Use default bid increment table for all listings
Opening Bid/Reserve | Bid Increment
$0.00 - $99.00 | $1.00
$100.00 - $249.99 | $2.50
$250.00 - $499.99 | $5.00
$500.00 - $999.99 | $10.00
$1,000.00 - $2,499.99 | $25.00
$2,500.00 - $4,999.99 | $50.00
$5,000.00+ | $100.00
Use custom bid increment table for all listings
Custom Bid Increment Tabe
Opening Bid/Reserve | Bid Increment
$0.00 - $99.00 | $1.00
$100.00 - $249.99 | $2.50
$250.00 - $499.99 | $5.00
$500.00 - $999.99 | $10.00
$1,000.00 - $2,499.99 | $25.00
$2,500.00 - $4,999.99 | $50.00
$5,000.00+ | $100.00
Save
Cancel

Fig. 33B

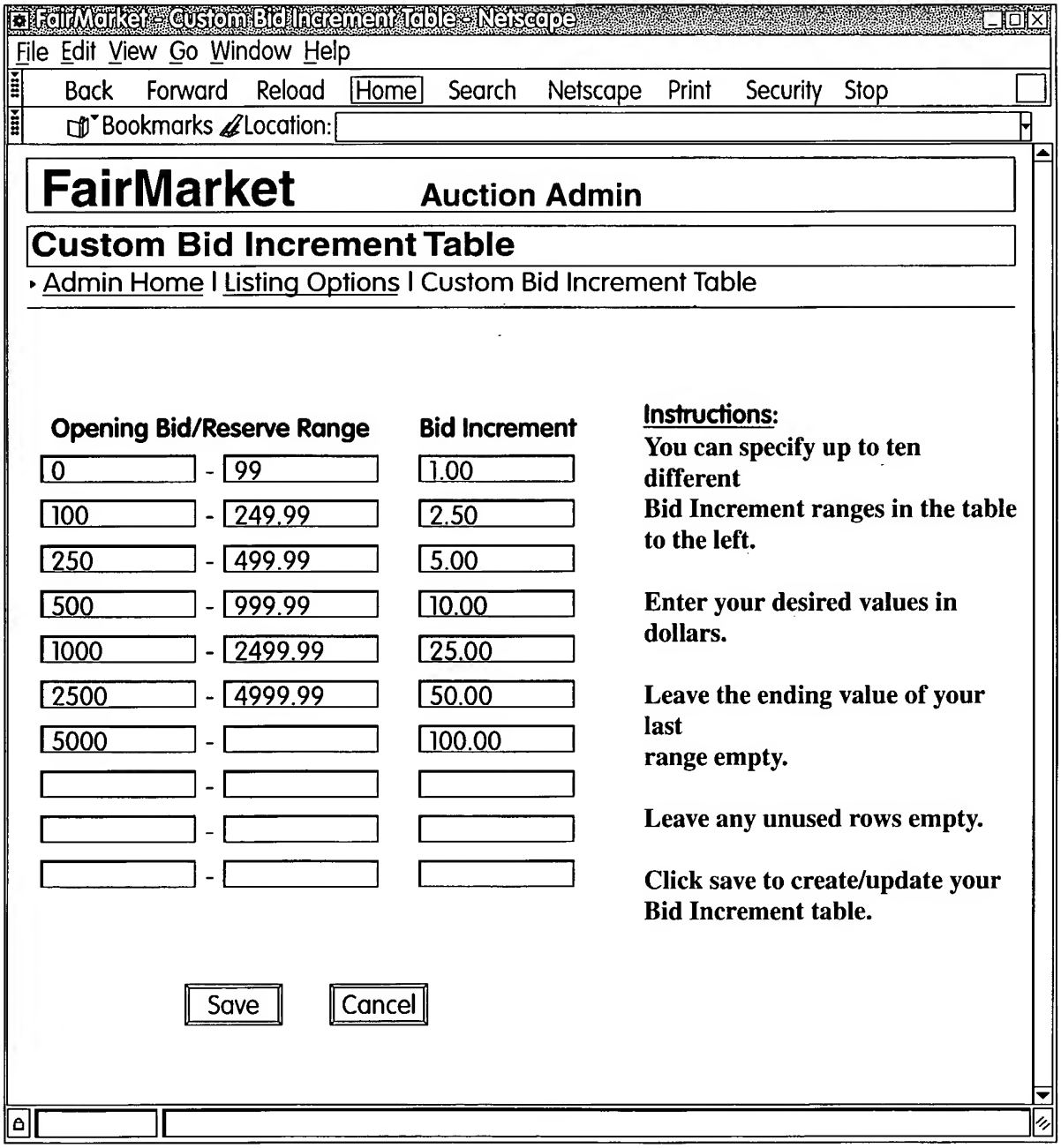
FairMarket - Custom Bid Increment Table - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
Custom Bid Increment Table
Admin Home | Listing Options | Custom Bid Increment Table
Opening Bid/Reserve Range
Bid Increment
0 - 99 1.00
100 - 249.99 2.50
250 - 499.99 5.00
500 - 999.99 10.00
1000 - 2499.99 25.00
2500 - 4999.99 50.00
5000 - 100.00
Instructions:
You can specify up to ten different
Bid Increment ranges in the table to the left.
Enter your desired values in dollars.
Leave the ending value of your last
range empty.
Leave any unused rows empty.
Click save to create/update your Bid Increment table.
Save
Cancel

Fig. 34

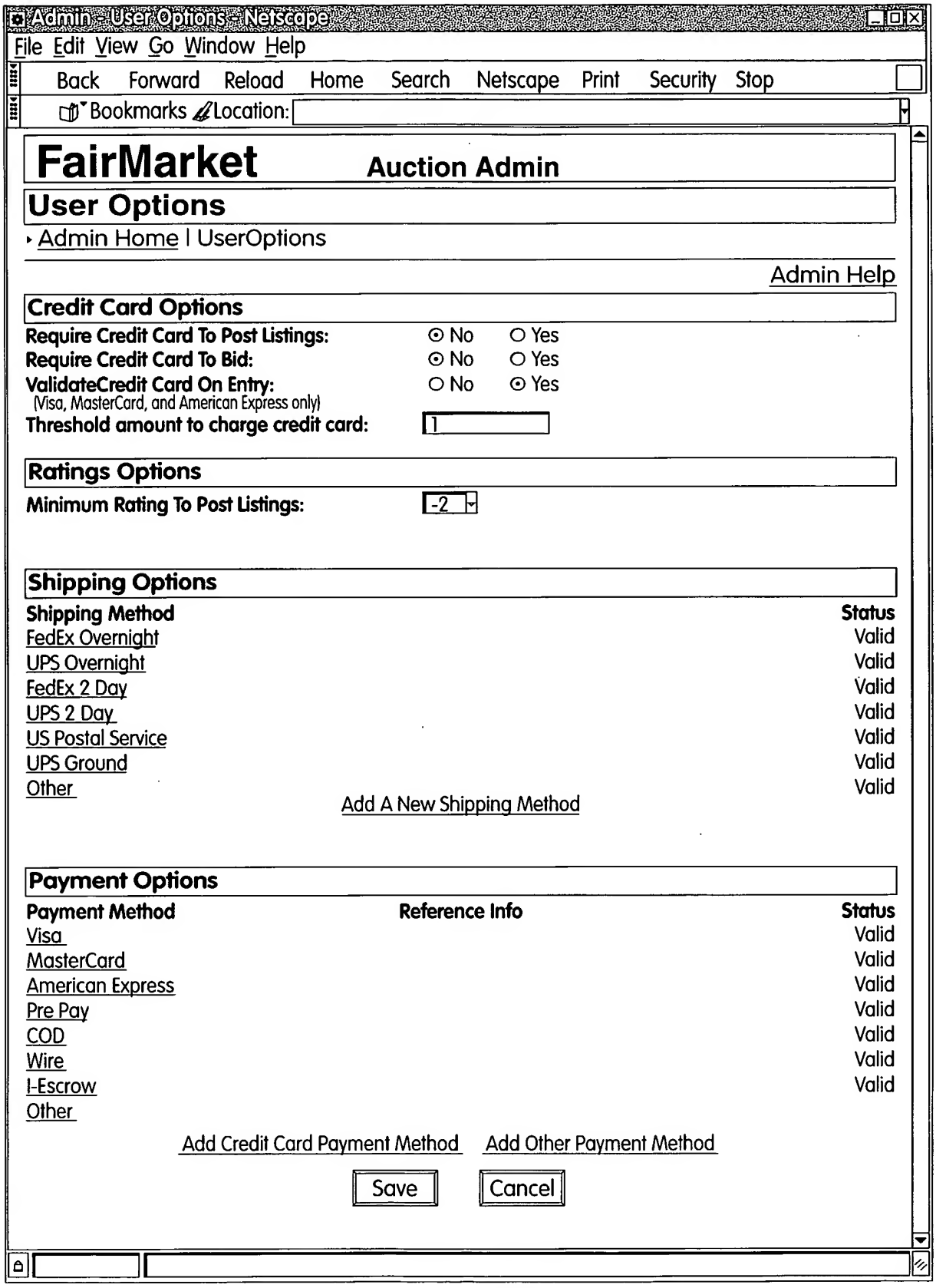
Admin - User Options - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
User Options
Admin Home | UserOptions
Admin Help
Credit Card Options
Require Credit Card To Post Listings: No Yes
Require Credit Card To Bid: No Yes
ValidateCredit Card On Entry: No Yes
(Visa, MasterCard, and American Express only)
Threshold amount to charge credit card: 1
Ratings Options
Minimum Rating To Post Listings: -2
Shipping Options
Shipping Method
Status
FedEx Overnight Valid
UPS Overnight Valid
FedEx 2 Day Valid
UPS 2 Day Valid
US Postal Service Valid
UPS Ground Valid
Other Valid
Add A New Shipping Method
Payment Options
Payment Method
Reference Info
Status
Visa Valid
MasterCard Valid
American Express Valid
Pre Pay Valid
COD Valid
Wire Valid
I-Escrow Valid
Other
Add Credit Card Payment Method
Add Other Payment Method
Save
Cancel

Fig. 35

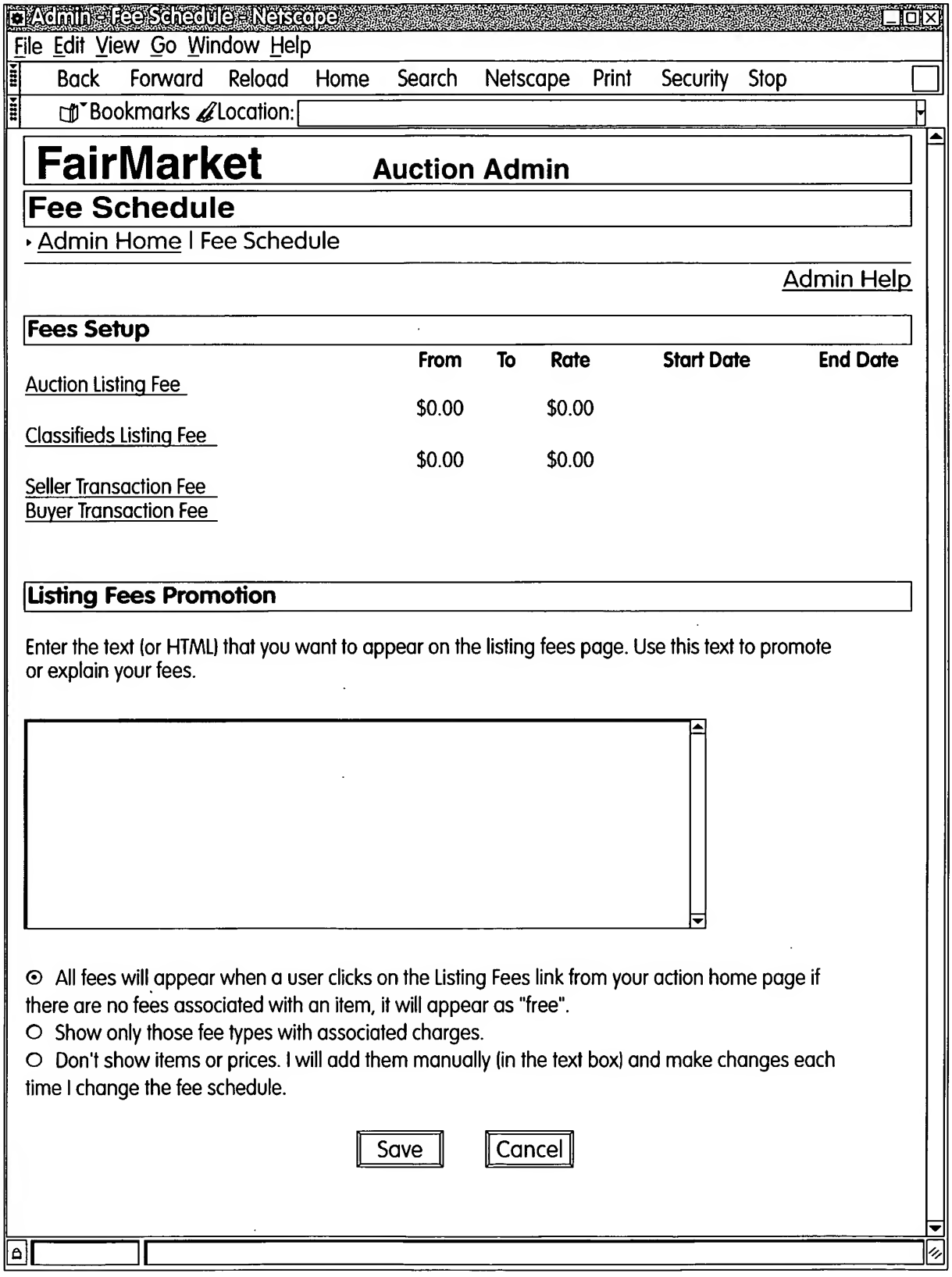
Admin - Fee Schedule - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket Auction Admin
Fee Schedule
Admin Home | Fee Schedule
Admin Help
Fees Setup
From To Rate Start Date End Date
Auction Listing Fee
$0.00 $0.00
Classifieds Listing Fee
$0.00 $0.00
Seller Transaction Fee
Buyer Transaction Fee
Listing Fees Promotion
Enter the text (or HTML) that you want to appear on the listing fees page. Use this text to promote or explain your fees.
All fees will appear when a user clicks on the Listing Fees link from your action home page if there are no fees associated with an item, it will appear as "free".
Show only those fee types with associated charges.
Don't show items or prices. I will add them manually (in the text box) and make changes each time I change the fee schedule.
Save
Cancel

Fig. 36

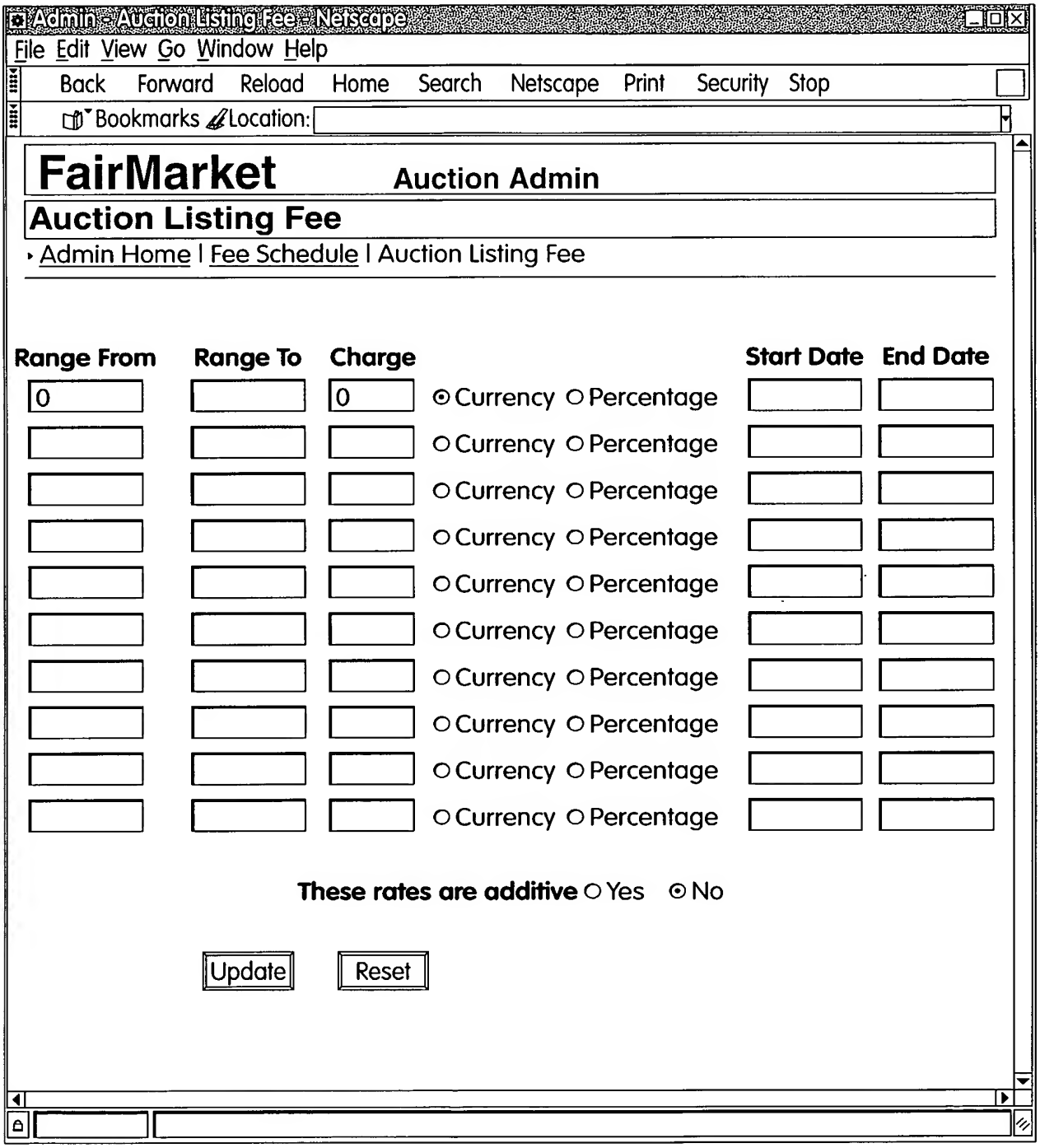
Admin - Auction Listing Fee - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket Auction Admin
Auction Listing Fee
Admin Home | Fee Schedule | Auction Listing Fee
Range From
Range To
Charge
Start Date
End Date
0
0
Currency Percentage
These rates are additive Yes No
Update
Reset

Fig. 37

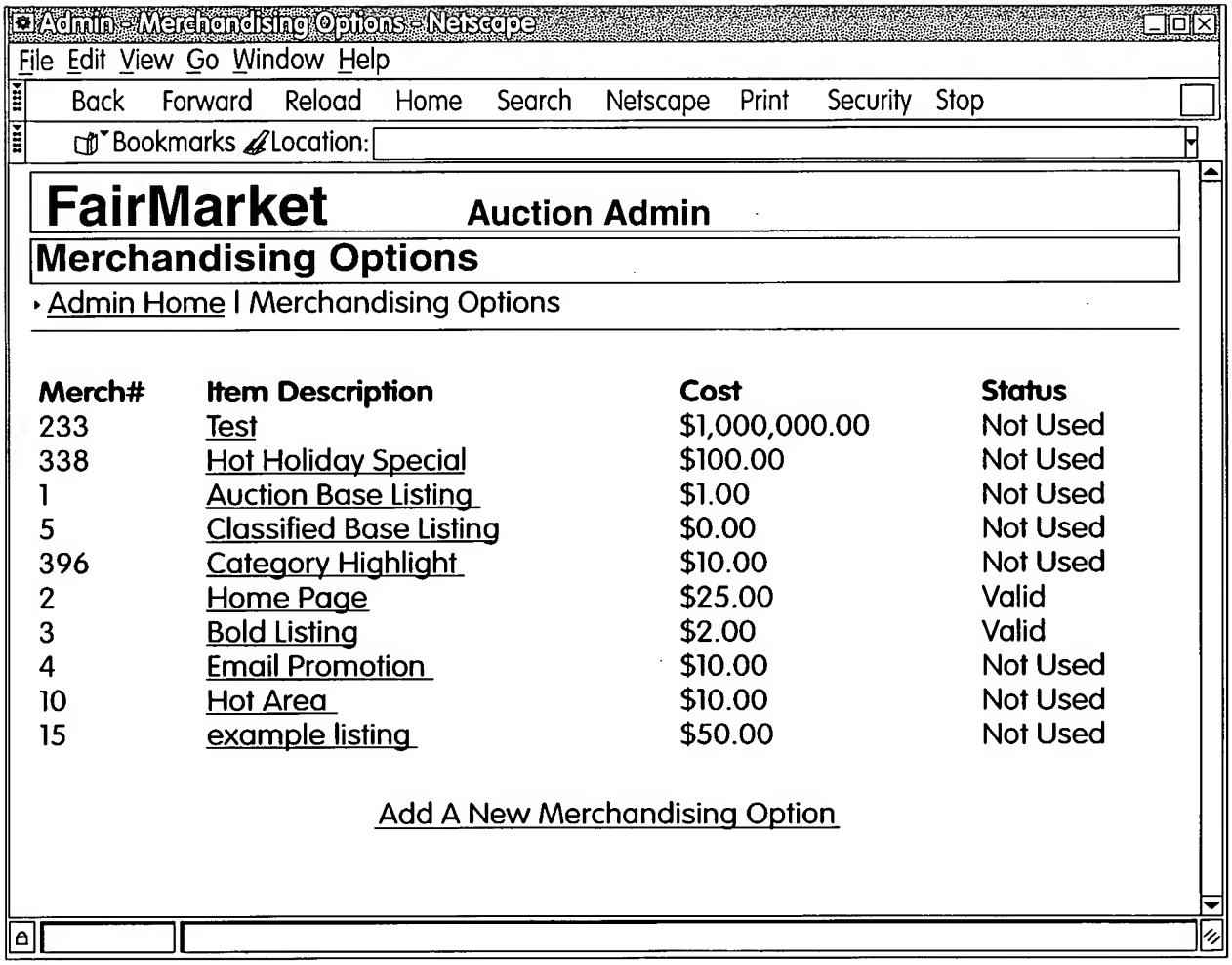
Admin - Merchandising Options - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket Auction Admin
Merchandising Options
Admin Home | Merchandising Options
Merch# Item Description Cost Status
233 Test $1,000,000.00 Not Used
338 Hot Holiday Special $100.00 Not Used
1 Auction Base Listing $1.00 Not Used
5 Classified Base Listing $0.00 Not Used
396 Category Highlight $10.00 Not Used
2 Home Page $25.00 Valid
3 Bold Listing $2.00 Valid
4 Email Promotion $10.00 Not Used
10 Hot Area $10.00 Not Used
15 example listing $50.00 Not Used
Add A New Merchandising Option

Fig. 38

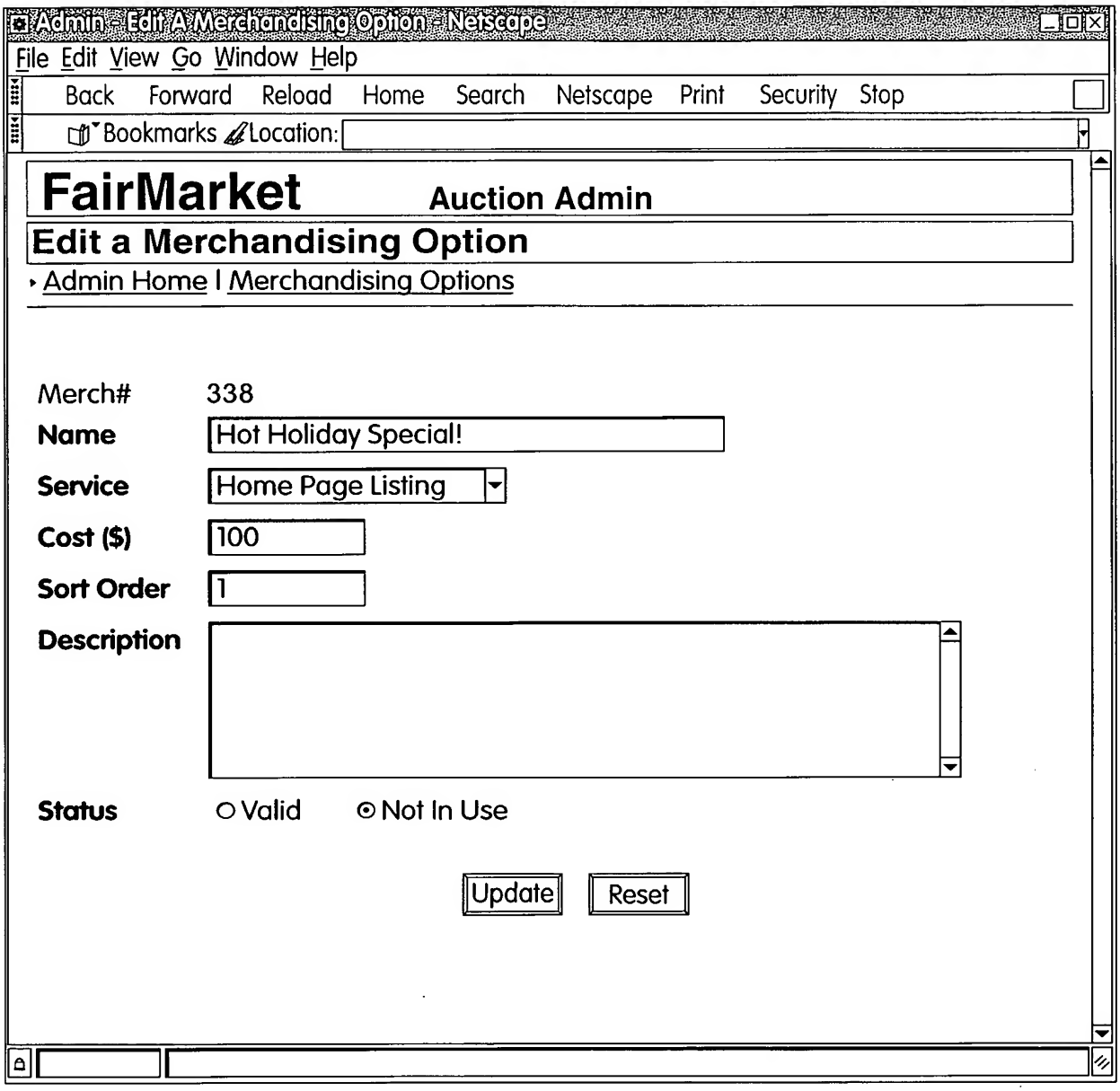
Admin - Edit A Merchandising Option - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Location:
FairMarket
Auction Admin
Edit a Merchandising Option
Admin Home | Merchandising Options
Merch# 338
Name
Hot Holiday Special!
Service
Home Page Listing
Cost ($)
100
Sort Order
1
Description
Status
Valid
Not In Use
Update
Reset

Fig. 39

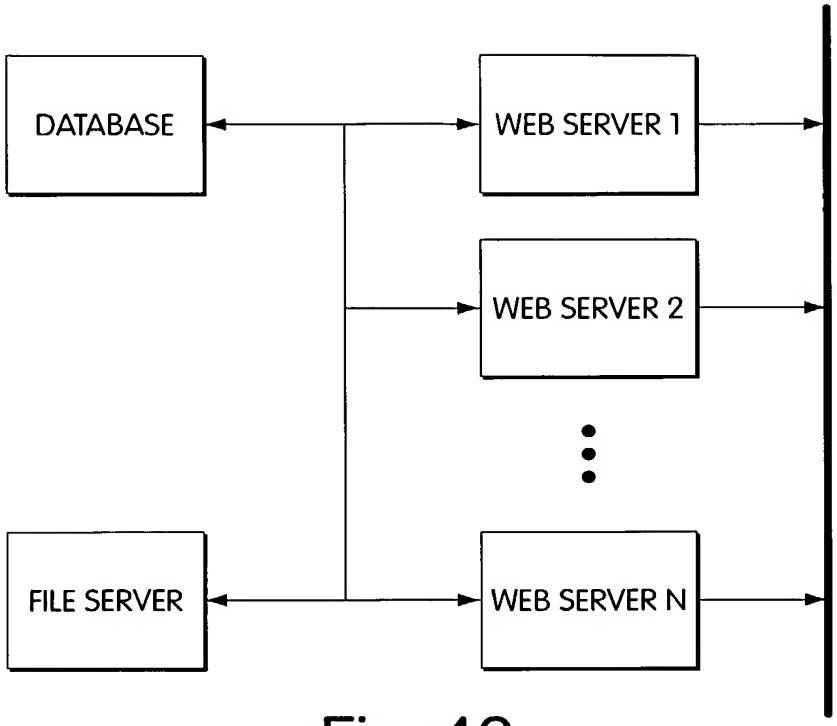
DATABASE
WEB SERVER 1
WEB SERVER 2
FILE SERVER
WEB SERVER N

Fig. 40

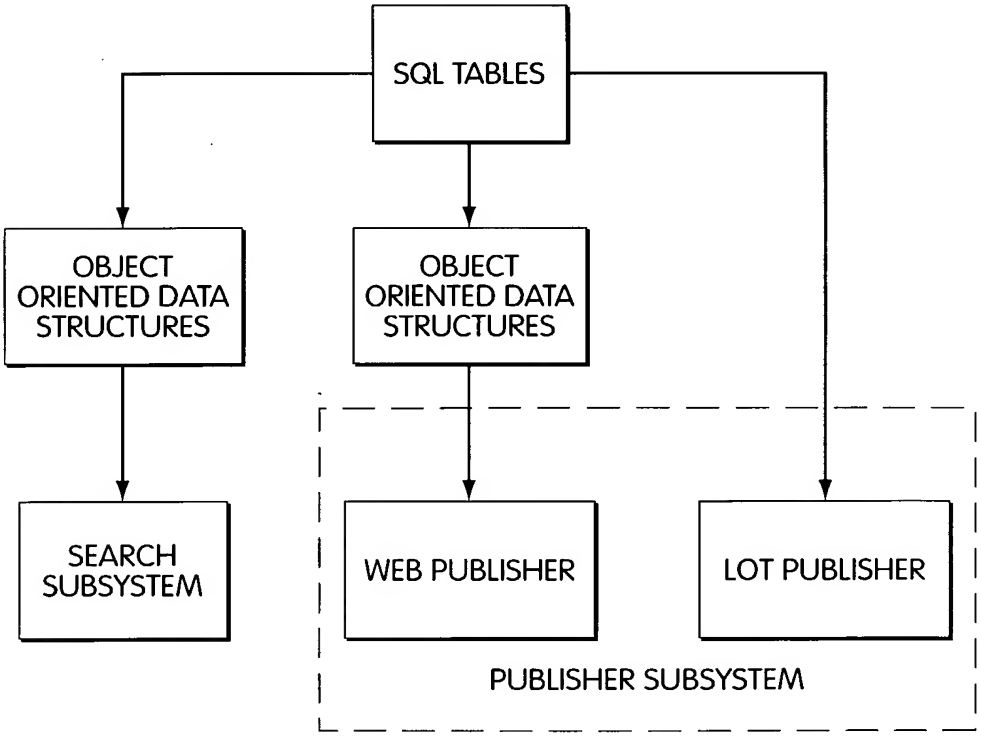
SQL TABLES
OBJECT ORIENTED DATA STRUCTURES
OBJECT ORIENTED DATA STRUCTURES
SEARCH SUBSYSTEM
WEB PUBLISHER
LOT PUBLISHER
PUBLISHER SUBSYSTEM

Fig. 41

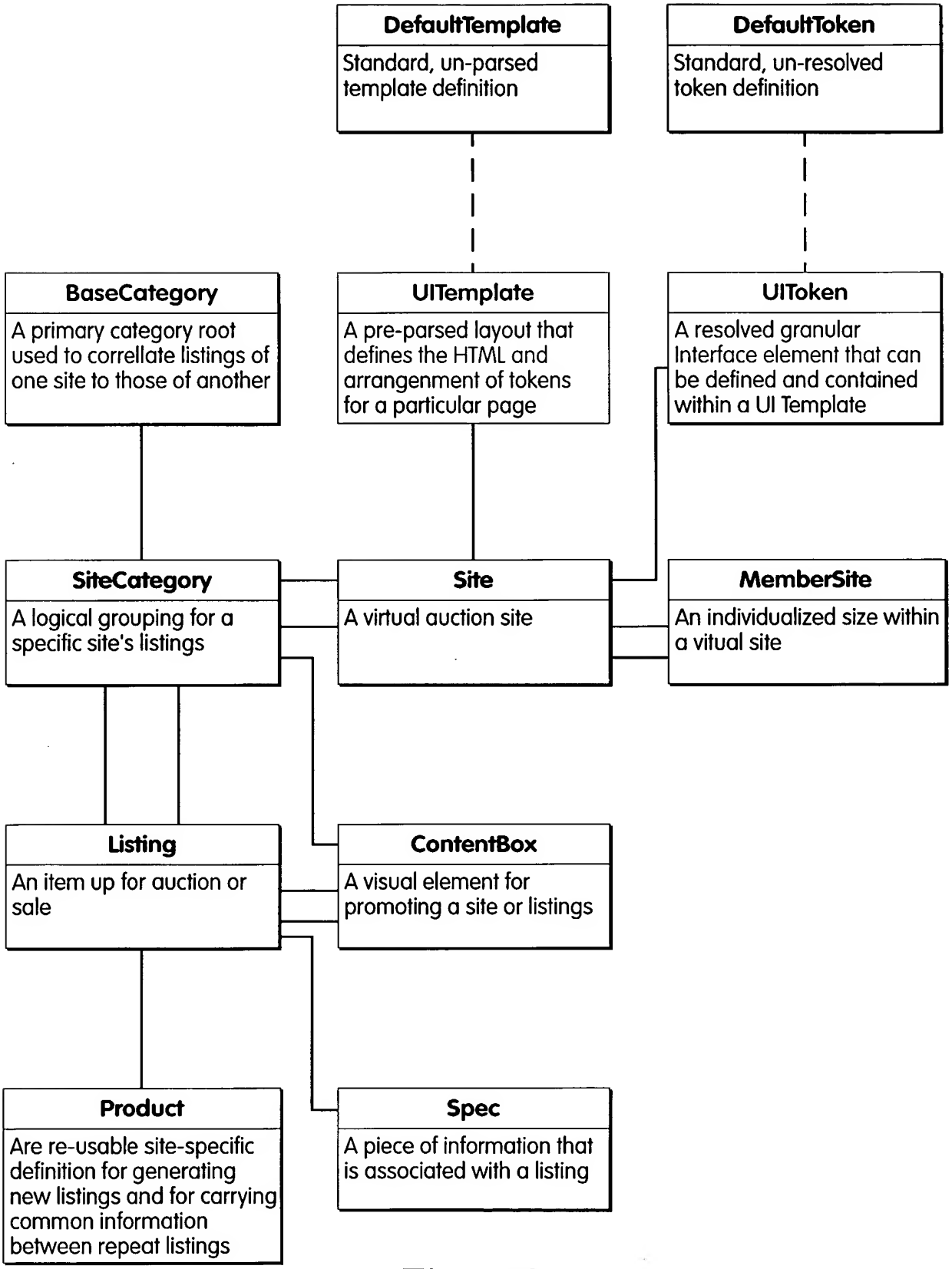
DefaultTemplate
Standard, un-parsed template definition
DefaultToken
Standard, un-resolved token definition
BaseCategory
A primary category root used to correllate listings of one site to those of another
UITemplate
A pre-parsed layout that defines the HTML and arrangenment of tokens for a particular page
UIToken
A resolved granular Interface element that can be defined and contained within a UI Template
SiteCategory
A logical grouping for a specific site's listings
Site
A virtual auction site
MemberSite
An individualized size within a vitual site
Listing
An item up for auction or sale
ContentBox
A visual element for promoting a site or listings
Product
Are re-usable site-specific definition for generating new listings and for carrying common information between repeat listings
Spec
A piece of information that is associated with a listing

Fig. 42

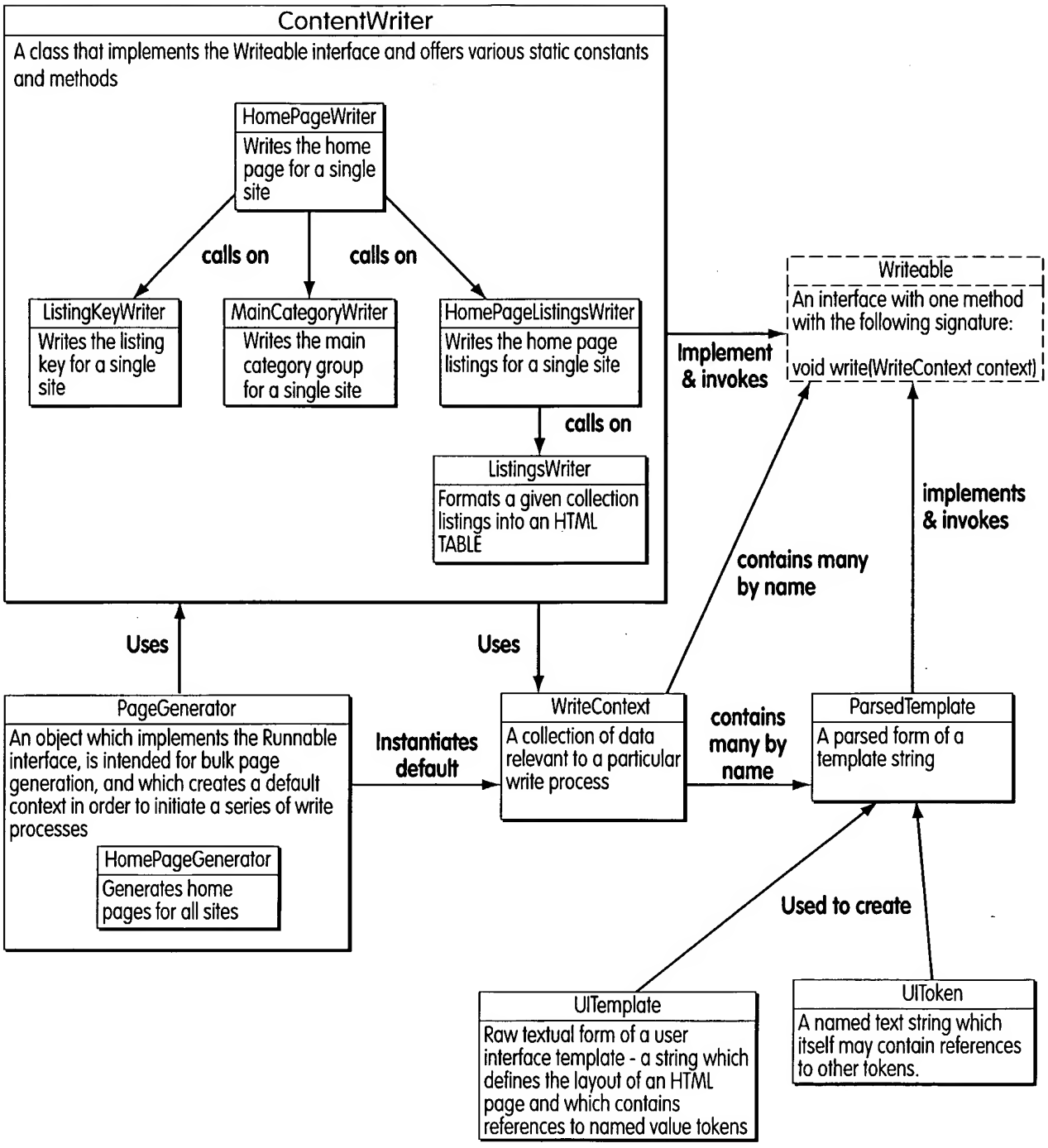
ContentWriter
A class that implements the Writeable interface and offers various static constants and methods
HomePageWriter
Writes the home page for a single site
calls on
calls on
ListingKeyWriter
Writes the listing key for a single site
MainCategoryWriter
Writes the main category group for a single site
HomePageListingsWriter
Writes the home page listings for a single site
calls on
ListingsWriter
Formats a given collection listings into an HTML TABLE
Writeable
An interface with one method with the following signature:
void write(WriteContext context)
Implement & invokes
implements & invokes
contains many by name
Uses
Uses
PageGenerator
An object which implements the Runnable interface, is intended for bulk page generation, and which creates a default context in order to initiate a series of write processes
HomePageGenerator
Generates home pages for all sites
Instantiates default
WriteContext
A collection of data relevant to a particular write process
contains many by name
ParsedTemplate
A parsed form of a template string
Used to create
UITemplate
Raw textual form of a user interface template - a string which defines the layout of an HTML page and which contains references to named value tokens
UIToken
A named text string which itself may contain references to other tokens.

Fig. 43

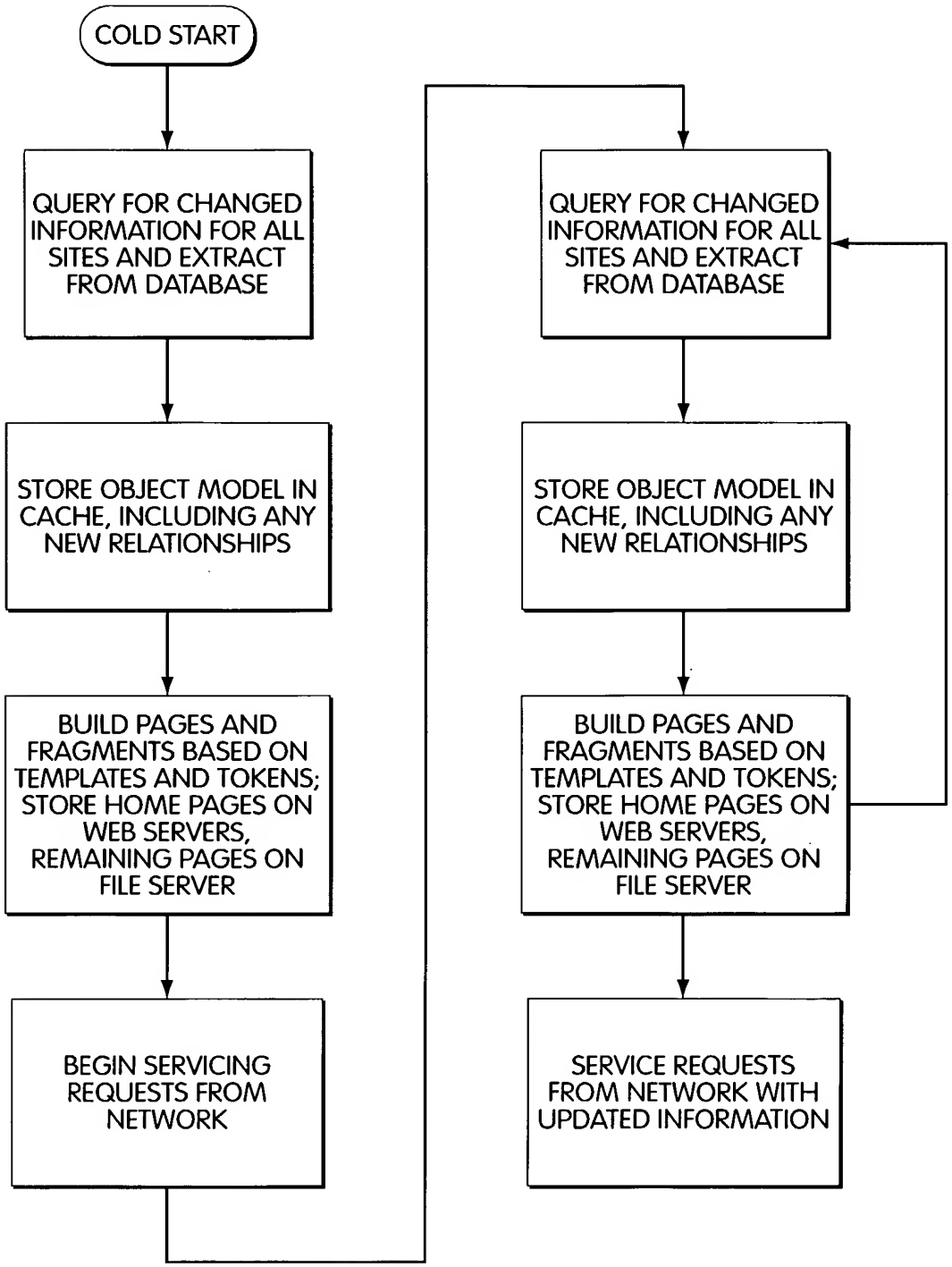
COLD START
QUERY FOR CHANGED INFORMATION FOR ALL SITES AND EXTRACT FROM DATABASE
STORE OBJECT MODEL IN CACHE, INCLUDING ANY NEW RELATIONSHIPS
BUILD PAGES AND FRAGMENTS BASED ON TEMPLATES AND TOKENS; STORE HOME PAGES ON WEB SERVERS, REMAINING PAGES ON FILE SERVER
BEGIN SERVICING REQUESTS FROM NETWORK
QUERY FOR CHANGED INFORMATION FOR ALL SITES AND EXTRACT FROM DATABASE
STORE OBJECT MODEL IN CACHE, INCLUDING ANY NEW RELATIONSHIPS
BUILD PAGES AND FRAGMENTS BASED ON TEMPLATES AND TOKENS; STORE HOME PAGES ON WEB SERVERS, REMAINING PAGES ON FILE SERVER
SERVICE REQUESTS FROM NETWORK WITH UPDATED INFORMATION

Fig. 44

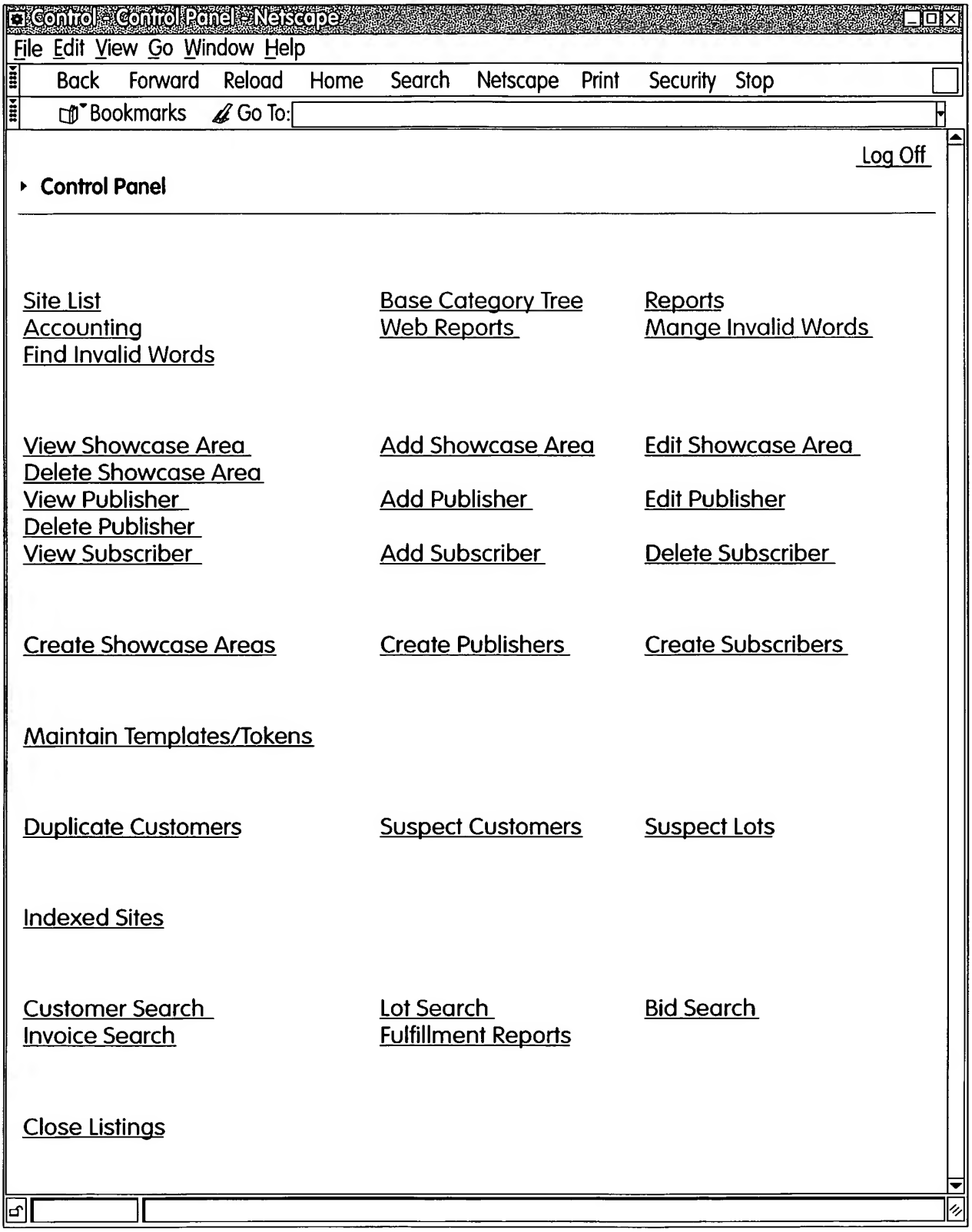
Control - Control Panel - Netscape
File Edit View Go Window Help
Back Forward Reload Home Search Netscape Print Security Stop
Bookmarks Go To:
Log Off
Control Panel
Site List
Base Category Tree
Reports
Accounting
Web Reports
Mange Invalid Words
Find Invalid Words
View Showcase Area
Add Showcase Area
Edit Showcase Area
Delete Showcase Area
View Publisher
Add Publisher
Edit Publisher
Delete Publisher
View Subscriber
Add Subscriber
Delete Subscriber
Create Showcase Areas
Create Publishers
Create Subscribers
Maintain Templates/Tokens
Duplicate Customers
Suspect Customers
Suspect Lots
Indexed Sites
Customer Search
Lot Search
Bid Search
Invoice Search
Fulfillment Reports
Close Listings

Fig. 45

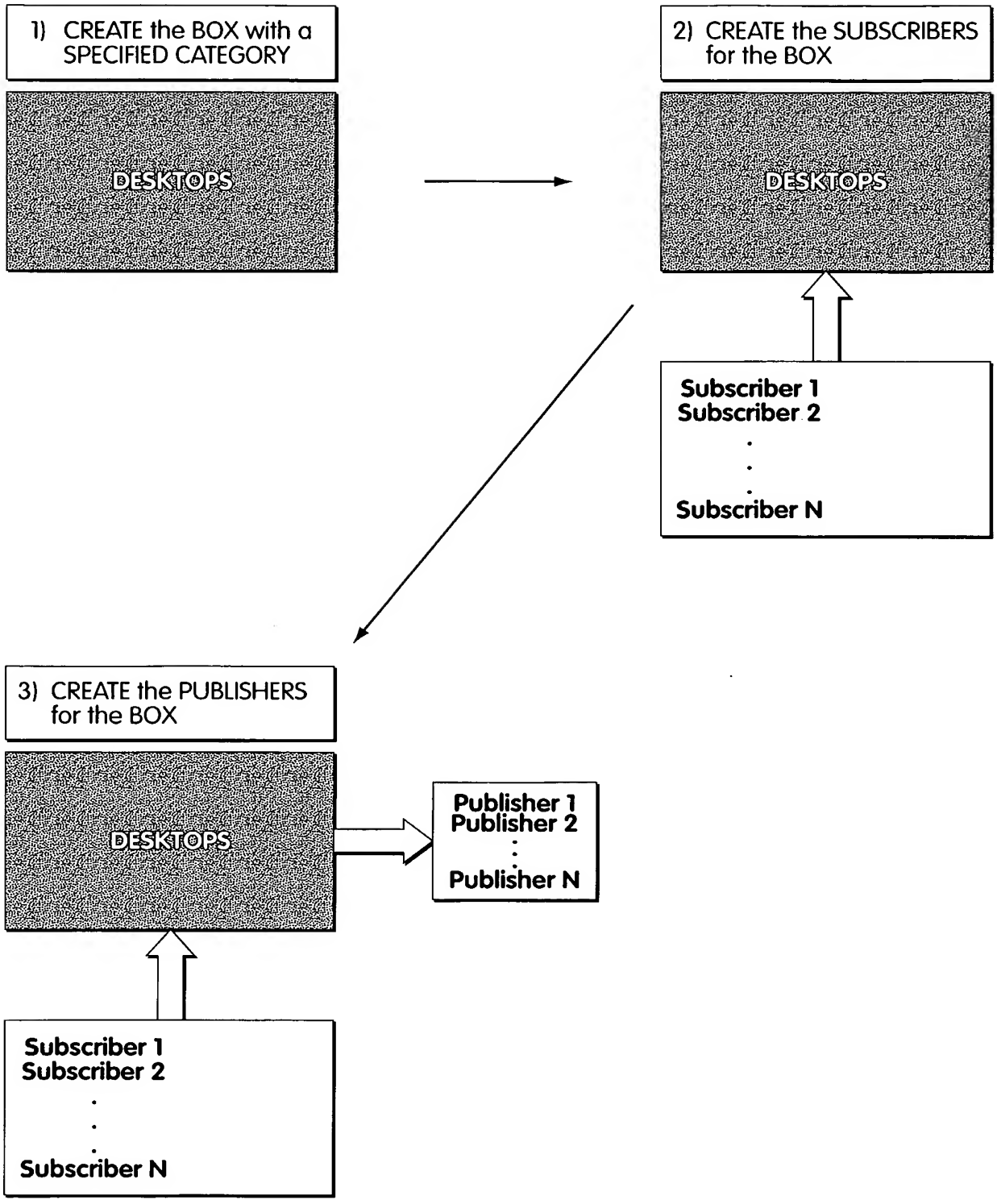
1) CREATE the BOX with a SPECIFIED CATEGORY
DESKTOPS
2) CREATE the SUBSCRIBERS for the BOX
DESKTOPS
Subscriber 1
Subscriber 2
Subscriber N
3) CREATE the PUBLISHERS for the BOX
DESKTOPS
Publisher 1
Publisher 2
Publisher N
Subscriber 1
Subscriber 2
Subscriber N

Fig. 46